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Labour: fit to attack the working class

THATCHER has carried out a cabinet reshuffle in an attempt to improve the government's 'presentation'. Yet, as has been pointed out by all and sundry, the Tories problems are far more profound. There are many reasons why the government is in trouble, most of them objective. It is very difficult, perhaps impossible, to put a good face on soaring inflation and interest rates, let alone the poll tax, Clarke's NHS reforms, environmental pollution and the privatisation of water. No wonder the Tories are at odds with each other and no wonder they are unpopular with the electorate.

Since its debacle in 1979 the Labour Party has looked a hopeless mess. As recently as last February, you could read in the *Financial Times* that "the British Government would be in trouble ... if it had an opposition". Leader articles are very different today. Labour now seems far more acceptable to bourgeois opinion (even *The Economist* has speculated about Labour being ready for government in the late 1990s).

Of course this is in part due to its recent abandonment of the shibboleths of the Labour left such as unilateralism, opposition to the EC and large scale re-nationalisation. But only in part. Labour's revival is not only due to its turn to the right, what *Marxism Today* calls its transformation into a modern European social democratic party. It is also due to the government's loss of popularity and the virtual collapse of the old Alliance parties. For the first time since he became leader of the Labour Party Kinnock seems to have luck on his side.

That does not mean that Labour will romp home in 1991 or 1992. The Tories are in mid term, a period when governments traditionally find their standing plummet. Labour's new policies have not been put under the spotlight of searching criticism and there still remains the possibility of left/right conflict breaking out if the growing tide of militancy finds itself channelled into Labourism. So there is no reason to believe that the Tory Party is no longer a serious candidate to be the dominant party of British politics.

Nonetheless the Labour Party has experienced a revival. Talk of the "next Labour government" should be treated seriously. This has dawned on those who declared the official labour movement "dead" (the Revolutionary Communist Party) and those who insisted in front page headlines that "Labour can't win" (*Marxism Today*). Even they now admit that Kinnock's party currently seems to be in an electable position for the first time in many years.

Over the past few months now, the Labour Party has been improving its position in the opinion polls, something which was given concreteness in June with two by-election victories and a good

performance in the nationwide Euro elections. Indeed, an *Observer/Harris* poll gave Labour a 14 point lead over the Tories, registering 48% to the government's 34% shortly after the elections (*The Guardian* June 26).

Naturally, if Kinnock is able to sustain such a lead it will add to the divisions within the Tory Party as well as increasing Labour's election chances. However, whether the election of a Labour government would be beneficial to the working class is another matter entirely.

In a series of five articles (the last one dated August 2 1989) in the *Morning Star* Joe Berry has been writing about the performance of Britain's Labour governments from 1924, when MacDonald first walked into No10, to 1979, when Callaghan had to leave after being beaten by Thatcher's Tories.

It is with a sorry heart that Berry catalogues the anti-working class measures, attacks on living standards and willingness to loyally serve the cause of British imperialism. In his last article he is even forced to admit that with Kinnock's 'new realist' programme 'the next Labour government' would simply be a rerun of previous ones. Berry cannot quite understand why this should be. And in spite of the certainty that it would be, he and his Communist Party of Britain chums will of course be voting Labour come the next election. To paraphrase Goethe, "those who do not understand the past are doomed to relive it".

So why has each new Labour government always relived the reactionary record of past Labour governments? And why should militant workers have no truck with Labourism? Simple. The Labour Party is a bourgeois workers' party. In other words it is a party fully and irredeemably committed to the interests of British capitalism, but resting on a working class base in terms of both votes and the organisations of the trade union movement.

Anyone who doubts this definition can simply look at the history of the party. Even reading Berry's amateurish and superficial scribbles it is crystal clear that Labourism is as loyal to capitalism as any other bourgeois party. In and out of office (as Berry actually shows in spite of not really wanting to) it has a record that is in essence no different to Tory governments or those the Liberals formed before being supplanted as the second party in the 1922 general election.

Kinnock, as anyone who has taken the bother to listen, makes no bones about it. He will run capitalism. To prove it he has done his utmost to distance Labour from any outbreak of working class struggle and gone all out to reassure the bourgeoisie of his trustworthiness. In the process he has shown himself up as a despicable

hypocrite. Long time CND member Kinnock did not show the slightest compunction or embarrassment when he unceremoniously dumped unilateralism.

Like every other leader Labour has ever had, he is compelled by the nature of the party to bend to the interests of British imperialism. And British imperialism needs nuclear weapons if it is to maintain its standing as a world power (even a second ranking one). It does not want to be reduced to the level of an Italy or a Canada. So out goes the Kinnock with the 'SOS' CND badge, and in comes the realistic Kinnock, the 'statesman', who promises to unleash a nuclear holocaust if it serves the interests of British imperialism. This is only part of Walworth Road's repackaging.

Labour has always been a racist party. Now it joins the Tories against a possible influx of Hong Kong refugees. On Ireland, Labour is now committed to "eventual" reunification. Not only is this worthless because of its record – it was a Labour government which sent in the troops in 1969, it was a Labour government which introduced and implemented the notorious Prevention of Terrorism Act – it is also worthless because Labour would only countenance Irish reunification on terms favourable to British imperialism. And because Irish reunification has never seemed to be favourable to British imperialism while it has been out of office, Labour has called for IRA blood every time a member of her majesty's state machine has been killed, and has maintained a staunchly bi-partisan approach towards the Tory conduct of Britain's colonial war in Ireland.

Bi-partisanship is not confined to Ireland. Labour is now committed to keeping many Tory anti-trade union laws. It has abandoned all promises about ending mass unemployment and actually backs the slave labour scheme ET. Its opposition to the Tories has been purely parliamentary, purely rhetorical.

The masses have been seen as a problem, to be marched up the hill and down again in true Grand Old Duke of York fashion. It never has had any intention of producing any sort of serious extraparliamentary fightback. On issue after issue Labour has done everything to blunt mass movements that have developed, by insisting that they keep firmly within the law (such as the NHS and anti-Poll Tax 'fightbacks'). To repeat, Labour is a staunchly pro-capitalist party. Only a fool or a complete charlatan could deny it.

Readers of *The Leninist* will know full well that our organisation has never suffered from illusions in Labourism. Hence what we Leninists need to think through is not the danger of the 'next Labour government' attacking the working class. It will. That is obvious (as we have said, Kinnock openly promises to run capitalism

– and undoubtedly, if given the chance, he will). What we have to confront is whether or not the Labour Party has returned to being the alternative party of government and what exact character any Labour government would have.

We have argued that the two party system of swings and roundabouts of Tory/Labour governments broke down in the 1980s; that Labour is no longer the alternative party of government it was under Attlee in the 1940s, Gaitskell in the 1950s and Wilson in the 1960s, but a party of crisis. Should the revival in Labour's fortunes lead us to change this assessment? Not at the moment.

A Tory fourth term still looks the most likely scenario. This should not be taken to read that a Labour government is impossible. Parties of crisis can produce governments of crisis. If Tory standing plummets still further due to economic collapse and/or the militant wave that is presently gathering, it might become necessary for the ruling class to place the Labour Party into office. Or, more accurately, for a section of the ruling class to place the Labour Party into office.

This was how Britain got its first two Labour governments, how the last one stayed in office when it lost its overall majority. Votes of Liberal MPs got MacDonald into office and Liberal MPs kept Callaghan there after the signing of a formal Lib/Lab pact in March 1977. Owen's party might be a rump. But in this context his praise for the Kinnockite Labour Party is highly significant.

Anyway, a Kinnock government might not be a bad thing for Owen.

For the working class, though, it is another matter. In conditions of stagnant capitalism Labour would not be able to produce the 'radical' reforms it did in 1945-51, when Attlee was able to create a large nationalised sector in the economy, introduce the NHS and promise the dawn of socialism (as well as finishing off the Nazis, developing the A bomb and helping to found Nato).

A Kinnock government would have none of these history book making possibilities. He must cut his cloth according to the reduced conditions of the 1990s. Defusing working class militancy in order to reassess capitalist stability could not be done with a big carrot. It would need the same sort of big stick the Tories have used. In the meantime Kinnock will do everything to prove to the ruling class that Labour is 'fit' for this task.

We shouldn't wait to be 'disappointed'. A Kinnock government would carry out 'Tory' ie capitalist, policies. We should prepare to fight whichever bourgeois party gets a parliamentary majority. The Tory Party may be the bosses' 'preferred party of government' but the Kinnock Labour Party is little different. This is accepted by almost the entire spectrum of left wing opinion. Yet, from the SWP

to the CPB, from *Militant* to *Tribune*, the call is made time and time again to vote and work for a Labour victory. No one should doubt that at the next election they will make the same plea.

To most of the British left, the Labour Party with all its 'Tory' policies is infinitely preferable to a Tory government. This is the lesser of evils theory of politics, which leads US radicals to loyally line up behind whatever reactionary the Democrats field against the Republicans, and would hypothetically lead their German counterparts into supporting Hitler if he were challenged by an even more extreme Nazi.

Most of the Labour left are trapped in this logic: Labour's policies are anti-working class but not as anti-working class as the Tories. History tells us otherwise. The fact is that the Labour left is, in the last analysis, loyal to the Labour Party (and thus the bourgeoisie), not the working class. Because of this it will not and cannot break from the Labour right. Instead it provides a left cover for the anti-working class promises and practices of Labour leaders by calling Labour the lesser evil. As such we must treat the Labour left's perennial refrain of 'after them us', with the contempt it deserves.

Of course a left Labour government is not impossible. A left government could be on the cards at times of revolutionary upsurge, when the right has been thoroughly exposed. But the emergence of any such government would not be the first stage of socialism. It would be last barrier the working class must overcome in its fight to make revolution. Such was the situation during 1917 in Russia.

The Labour left at the moment is, however, marginal. The Socialist Movement's founding conference in Sheffield was far smaller than its organisers expected and was a typically eclectic and directionless affair. The shift to the right by Kinnock and the collapse of the Communist Party has thrown the left's utopian ideas to the four winds and produced a harvest of confusion and splits. But, in spite of all the splits, the role of the Labour left at the next general election is not in doubt. It will fight for Kinnock and excuse his openly pro-capitalist platform.

For Leninists, whether or not the Labour Party under Kinnock is elected at the next election is a secondary question. Our position is determined by and subordinated to the struggle for socialism. Getting rid of Thatcher is not the number one priority, as so much of the left says it is. What is crucial is how we get rid of her. Through militant, revolutionary struggle or a vote in the House of Commons. Leninists will expose the sham of bourgeois democracy. We do not want to organise the proletariat to transform parliament, we will organise them to overthrow it!

Gareth Phillips



SO JARUZELSKI has confirmed that Tadeusz Mazowiecki is to form the next government in Poland. If proof were wanted, here it is: there is a general crisis of socialism. What we are seeing played out in Poland could be repeated in other socialist countries — a peaceful democratic counterrevolution.

There are those 'official communists' and Trotskyites who will, of course, refuse to see what is front of their eyes. That is their problem. The film is being run backwards and the leadership of the Polish United Workers Party is unlikely to do anything to stop it. Nor will Gorbachev.

Bureaucratic discipline in the PUWP has broken down. The party is faction ridden, with one wing openly arguing in favour of social democratisation. But whatever the factional differences a whole swathe at the top of the PUWP are committed to Solidarnosc's programme of restoring capitalism.

Far from having a material interest in maintaining the status quo of bureaucratic socialism, the PUWP government of Mieczyslaw Rakowski (now general secretary) devoted its time to "ensuring that senior functionaries took leading roles in the new joint stock companies" (*Financial Times* August 18 1989). In other words bureaucrats have been transforming themselves into capitalists. Although resented in the lower ranks, this gives the top bureaucrats a very material stake in ending socialism.

So although PUWP members are to be guaranteed the interior and defence ministries there is every reason to believe that neither the army nor the police will be used to crush the emerging new capitalist class. Rather they will be used to defend the emerging capitalist property relations.

As to the Soviet Union, socialism can no longer expect any help from this quarter. Under Gorbachev, the labour bureaucracy is undergoing the same bourgeoisification process as in Poland, and has as a result promised the west it will never again do a 1956 or 1968.

So what are the prospects for Poland? As Jack Conrad argued in the last edition of *The Leninist*, while Poland can experience a democratic peaceful counterrevolution, this would only be the first step. A consolidated post counterrevolutionary regime is unlikely to be able to rule democratically, and obviously violence remains the essence of any state, certainly an undemocratic capitalist one.

Poland's economy is in a mess. Opening it up to the forces of the market might make a thin layer of bureaucrats, middle men and capitalists rich, but for the mass of the population it can only mean the threat of unemployment, wage cuts and general uncertainty. These are not the conditions for a stable bourgeois democracy.

The Mazowiecki government is clearly transitional both in its all embracing composition, programme and methods. Being in government is bound to cause deep fissures in Solidarnosc. Its membership has slumped from the 10 million it enjoyed in its 1981 hayday. Now it is down to 2 million, who are divided between those who still see it as some sort of trade union and those who are bent on creating a western style Christian Democratic party.

The price increases and closures Mazowiecki must push through have the potential for causing a schism. No wonder Lech Walesa has stayed clear of getting directly involved in the business of government.

He is biding his time. In the event of chaos he can 'heed the call of the nation' and present himself as the reincarnation of his hero, the semi fascist dictator General Pilsudski, who ruled Poland throughout the 1920s and 30s with a combination of blood and iron.

There can be no deals with counterrevolution. It is essential that communists in Poland organise themselves, settle accounts with the Jaruzelskis, the Rakowskis and the Kiszcaks, and win the leadership of Poland's working class in order to make a new social revolution; this time from below.

The Editor

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LETTERS

Nice People

I cannot agree with comrade Sheriff's assessment of the Green Party in *The Leninist* No79. Far from being a 'side show', the issues of pollution, ozone depletion, global warming, de-forestation, green belts, etc are here to stay. This is because the future of the entire planet is at stake.

What kind of 'nice people' vote for a party which abhors the capitalist mode of production? What kind of 'nice people' vote for a party which advocates non-payment of the poll tax and leaving Nato? What kind of 'nice people' vote for the ending of the whole nuclear arms industry? Certainly not the 'nice people' of the Alliance parties.

The Green manifesto represents a radical critique of the state of mainstream politics in Britain today. Unlike the now defunct Alliance parties, the Green movement embodies the dawning of a new consciousness within the working class; a consciousness that can further existing nascent class consciousness.

An alliance of 'green' and 'red' consciousness within the working class has the revolutionary potential to sweep away not just the stark, brutal, individualistic ideology of the bourgeoisie but also what passes for socialism — Labourism.

The Greens have offered the people of this country the vision of a future society which promises harmony with nature, not conflict. We, as communists, must ally ourselves with this vision. Communism is all about harmony. But real harmony will only ever be realised after the working class has conquered capitalism and its barbaric ideology.

Clive Lewis
Herts

Sean Quinn replies,
We don't think pollution etc is a 'side show'. But the rise of the Green Party is, just like the CND before it. Lewis asks what kind of 'nice people' support non-payment of the poll tax and leaving Nato. Well, 'nice people' like the reactionary nationalists of the SNP and, worse, the 'political soldiers' of the NF, to name but two. There is nothing inherently progressive about such policies. They only take on such a meaning in the context of a wider class perspective.

It is not capitalism which the greens abhor, merely some of its symptoms. They are a political expression of the frightened petty bourgeoisie. This is proven by the fact that the greens drew the bulk of their support from a depletion of the Tory vote and the collapse of the Alliance vote.

To excuse his prostration before the latest bourgeois fad, Lewis is forced to dump all but a shallow pretence at the Marxist method. For instance, what is the ideology of the greens? As we argued in *The Leninist* No73, it is bourgeois. Thatcher and the CBI are green now, so is Kinnock, the Democrats and the Euros — or hadn't you noticed?

The greens are not a revolutionary, but a utopian reformist, movement. They want to use the bourgeois state to save mankind. We want to smash the bourgeois state to save mankind.

And what is this 'harmony' nonsense? Mankind's development has been through a ceaseless struggle with nature. Socialism and the development to communism will signal a giant step forward in humanity's mastery of nature through

an unprecedented development in the productivity of labour. This has nothing to do with the reactionary anti-industrial utopia of the greens.

There are no shortcuts to communism. To advocate the red-green alliance, as Lewis does, is to advocate disarming the working class. Green ideas are just as anti-working class as the Labourism which Lewis so rightly condemns. Comrade, do not paint them in any way communistic. Our flag stays red.

Irish voice

Irish Republican Socialist Party member Eamon Mullan was arrested at Manchester Airport in February under the PTA, after attending a march and rally for Viraj Mendis. He was served with a three year exclusion order under the PTA and deported. In April he appealed against the exclusion order and had it revoked. Eamon Mullan is only the third person to successfully appeal against exclusion under the PTA.

From July 17-26 Hands Off Ireland! organised a successful national speaking tour for comrade Mullan, covering London, Liverpool, Sheffield, Manchester, Doncaster and Chesterfield. Through the tour HOI! gained new contacts and a new HOI! branch was set up in Sheffield.

At a packed send-off social in London on Saturday 26 July, Eamon Mullan thanked HOI! for providing the IRSP with a platform. He said that Sinn Fein was doing its utmost to silence the IRSP, and that the speaking tour had helped to overcome this.

Rhian Morgan
London

Which Weapon?

When Lenin analysed questions like barricades, small guerrilla groups, artillery, demonstrations, the general strike, insurrection, parliamentary movements etc, it was always from the intelligent and common sense point of view that would judge each circumstance on whether or not it was practical, possible and would help the cause of the people, at the particular time and place in question.

In view of this it is obvious that the building of a mass party can only be accomplished in terms of legal actions. Otherwise the police simply arrest all the leaders and a lot of the members and put them in jail. A non-revolutionary, reformist party might exist if it had effective populist propaganda. Revolution is still illegal. Reform isn't. Both are part of the forward progress of humanity, but they can't occupy the same address, involve the same people, or be the same. They are simply two different things, each a different weapon in the total war Lenin speaks of.

The IRA are only a few hundred so they can't inflict the 25% casualties that are usually sufficient to cause an army to retreat. If they had the capacity to inflict 6,000 British casualties, for instance, the public outcry would force the capitalists to alter their control form and bring the troops home.

Their banks and commerce would still control the Six Counties just as they do the Twenty-six Counties now. So, the situation is at an impasse.

The objective of a war is to win. In a way it's like pointing an artillery piece. The best target where it is possible is the headquarters of the enemy command. Most of the time that can't be located, but in the case of a social revolution the actual power chiefs can be determined.

As they would feel the artillery shell beginning to land around them they would pick up the phone and discuss peace terms. They have the choice to live or die. The soldiers in the platoon do not. They can't stop the war or the shells falling on them. All they can do is run, take off their uniforms and desert. But the oligarchy chief has the power to stop the war and discuss terms of settlement.

Pete Francis

Racism

The letter from Sean Davies (*The Leninist* No80) regarding racist attacks raises important issues. Although, at present, organised fascists have been marginalised so that their largest organisation, the British National Party has only hundreds of members at most and is not the most frequent perpetrator of racism, their potential threat must not be forgotten. Nevertheless, nearly all the racist attacks are committed by unorganised rabble.

The state is the cause of much of the organised racism in this country, which takes the form of inhuman immigration laws, social security laws and police harassment. However, reforming the state through anti-discrimination measures is not the answer, and certainly does not foster unity. Just look at the worsening of conditions for black people living in the municipal socialist boroughs, with their equal opportunities policies.

Racism acts as a weapon of the ruling class in dividing the working class. The millions of black people living here can so easily become the scapegoat for the problems thrown up by a sinking British imperialism. The British working class will not be able to overthrow its ruling class unless it can effectively organise itself to combat racism.

Defence corps of both black and white, like the combat units which arose from the miners' Great Strike, are a necessity. Indeed there is a complacency within the working class movement about racism, hence the lack of response when almost entire families are burnt to death, and Kurdish refugees are refused leave to stay. Although there are signs of sections of the black population becoming militant, eg muslim youth in Bradford, the organisation of these is sporadic, and is not on a class basis. Without such a class basis, these organisations are likely to cause further segregation.

Black and white must unite, not merely in words, as with the SWP, but through defence corps and class unity to fight the common enemy, the root of racism and fascism: the British state.

Nita Patel
Wembley

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For political security we have changed certain names, addresses and details.

WRITE OR RING

If you would like to reply to any of these letters, raise questions or comment on articles in *The Leninist* please write to The Editor, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Or phone us on 01-431 3135.

DOCKERS

Isolated, the Liverpool dockers voted to return to work on August 7. Frankly, what else could they do?

Great docks strike betrayal – 1989

ACCORDING to Ron Todd, "People will cry 'Judas' and 'sellout' but we have a responsibility to the membership. We have got to face the realities of life. There are many battles that you lose." True, of course. But having seen it defeated, it is essential to learn the lessons of the dockers' strike. Todd and Co will not and cannot do that. He and his ilk are committed to maintaining the position of the trade union bureaucracy within capitalism, not fighting to overthrow it.

Todd still sits atop the TGWU – with all the privilege and prestige that entails. He can afford to say 'easy come, easy go'. The defeated dockers, not least those sacked after 30 years in the industry, cannot be so complacent and would be foolish indeed if they put any faith in the pledge made by John Prescott, Labour's shadow transport secretary, at the centenary celebration of the Great Dockworkers' Strike. His promise to reinstate them after the election of the 'next Labour government' is worthless, coming as it does from a leader of a party which seeks to "run capitalism" better than the Tories (Kinnoch). As Jack Dash would have said, dockers must look to their own strength.

The dockers' strike bore many of the hallmarks of the defensive period of class battles we have lived through for the past ten years or so. In a sense it was a replay of the crushing defeats of the print unions in the News International dispute and then the heroic P&O strikers. Brenda Dean and Sam McCluskie attempted the same sort of get out, blaming their "armies", as Ron Todd. But the printers, seafarers and dockers were lions led by donkeys.

The docks dispute, just as the P&O and News International disputes, was defensive. And although it is offensive strikes which are now becoming the order of the day, the defeat of the dockers does provide us with some stark and living lessons on how not to fight. We must take on board these lessons.

It is essential to grasp that, for the rank and file, the primary lesson is not simply to slag off Todd. But before dealing with what we consider the primary lesson, we must deal with Ron Todd and the left reformist TGWU leadership.

For the sake of internal T&G politics, Todd made all sorts of militant noises, he wanted to repair his left credentials and outflank the alternative leadership of Brian Nicholson (a former docker). But, criminally, no fighting strategy was developed, no concrete preparations were made. In effect Todd was waving the white flag to the government even before the fight had begun.

When Todd announced the decision to call the strike off on August 1, he tried to justify selling the men down the river by maintaining that: "In Britain you've got little or no chance of pursuing a legitimate dispute." That is true, at least to some extent. That is why in the pages of

this paper we have insisted that in order to be an effective trade unionist in Britain today, you must break the law! Yet Todd and his co-leaders of the T&G did everything to stay within the law.

Dockers voted twice, by three to one, to strike. But Todd – terrified that that the union's assets might be stripped by legal action from the port employers – headed off spontaneous wildcat strikes and spent three months squandering thousands of pounds of his members dues playing the British legal system game. This suited the bosses perfectly. They lost in the courts, but in the meantime the Docks Labour Scheme had been abolished. As a result dockers could freely be sacked.

Rank and file dockers were left frustrated and passive by Todd's 'strategy'. Consequently, breaches started to open in their ranks even before the battle had been joined. For instance, dockers in Sheerness had been solid back in April. After Todd's legal shenanigans, however, they accepted a local deal and worked throughout the remainder of the dispute. The threat of mass sackings soon opened up other breaches.

Crucially, though, T&G registered dockers were left isolated from non-registered T&G dockers, as well as the T&G members who keep Britain's airports and lorries running (and obviously therefore the wider working class movement). Todd's craven fear of falling foul of the Tories' anti-trade union laws on 'secondary action' led to his refusal to even consider involving unregistered dockers in the fight, despite many indications that, given a strong enough lead, these men would have come out. Unregistered Portsmouth voted to join the action and men in Felixstowe, also not covered by the Dock Labour Scheme, refused to handle diverted cargo.

Todd failed to build on this mood, let alone spread it to other dockers through a fiery propaganda campaign. There were no clear instructions to T&G members – all 1.4 million of them – to take action in support of the dockers. T&G drivers were requested not to cross picket lines by their union leadership – but not won to the politics of why. Throughout the strike there was only one national circular from the union's head office directly concerning the strike. Individual T&G militants around the country who were anxious to give support and practical solidarity to the dockers were left uncoordinated and directionless.

The record of the national leadership of the union is certainly abysmal – but quite frankly that is what workers should expect from the trade union bureaucracy which dominates our unions. We should expect no fight from them, let alone a winning strategy.

So rather than just bemoan the glaringly obvious fact that the trade union bureaucrats are treacherous misleaders, workers must address themselves to finding ways to ensure defeats like that inflicted

on the dockers are made a thing of the past. There are two main lessons from the dockers' strike.

Organisation. It was obvious long ago that the government was preparing to abolish the Docks Labour Scheme, it was obvious that it was preparing to withstand a long docks' strike ... but it was also obvious that Todd and the T&G tops were not going to provide effective, winning leadership. What that necessitated was the rank and file taking, firstly, the preparation of the strike into its own hands, and then, secondly, organising the strike as soon as the government announced it was going to scrap the scheme. An organisation of the militant rank and file could have forged links with militants in non-scheme ports like those at Felixstowe or Portsmouth and gone out to the class as a whole. It would not have been hidebound by the laws against 'secondary' and solidarity action that mesmerise Todd and his ilk. Unfortunately, while attempting to circumvent Todd, on a number of occasions the unofficial National Ports Shop Stewards Committee failed to achieve any of this. In part this was because of lack of dynamism, illustrated by the fact that not one leaflet from the NPSSC was issued in the course of the dispute. But the main reason was political.

Politics. The real key to winning the fight was not organisational, but political. In the absence of a strategy to unite the workforce, it was inevitable that individuals and groups would cave in to the bosses' threats. Even the best militants in the union seemed to think that it was impossible to spread the strike ... and yet how could dockers even hope to win without such a perspective? Above all, though, dockers needed to take the political offensive, raising the demand to spread the Docks Labour Scheme to every docker in this country, championing the rights and conditions of all workers and hence giving them all a direct stake in the success of the strike. Many dockers were almost shamed into fighting to defend a scheme which offered them job security and a decent standard of living. They needed to break out of such a narrow, defensive stance. The demand should have been raised for every worker to enjoy the same job security offered by the Docks Labour Scheme and for the smashing of the Tories' anti-trade union laws. Thus, they would have had the possibility of rallying to their banner, tens of thousands, perhaps millions of workers who itch for a chance to take on Thatcher and her gang.

It is quite right to criticise the TUC, the Labour Party and the T&G for their misleadership. But instead of pointlessly calling upon them to change their ways we must look to our own strength and the building of an alternative leadership in the workers' movement, which has a winning strategy and will fight. That is the main lesson of the dockers' defeat.

Ian Mahoney

IN STRUGGLE

Employment Training has been something of a flop for the government. It has had to drop the number of places on the scheme substantially, instead of expanding it as planned. Even now it cannot fill the existing places, with a massive drop-out rate. There are a number of factors behind this. One is that the scheme is still ostensibly voluntary, giving the unemployed an escape route. Another, as August's figures show, is that unemployment (not only through the government's massaging of statistics) is still declining in real terms. This is a temporary phenomenon. The unemployment question has not gone away. Economic growth rates are set to decline, from 4% in 1988 to an estimated 2.2% by 1991. Bourgeois economists predict that this will lead to a substantial rise in unemployment. This, combined with greater restrictions in claiming benefit, will mean stepping up attacks on the unemployed and a more wide ranging and effective use of ET or its future equivalents. That is why the Unemployed Workers Charter has not let up on its campaigning. Last year it organised the largest lobby of the TUC since the miners' Great Strike. This year the UWC is organising both a lobby of the TUC in Blackpool and a march from Manchester to the TUC to demand an end to union collaboration with slave labour schemes. Copies of the UWC's paper *Unemployed Organiser*, which carries details of all this, are still available: 20p each or 5p each for orders over 5.

In early August the CPSA Department of Transport Westminster branch invited representatives of Hands Off Ireland! and 'Time To Go' to speak. Terrified, management withdrew all facilities for the meeting. This had not happened since the miners' Great Strike, when a miner was prevented from entering the building to speak to the branch. This time branch responded swiftly by calling an emergency meeting at a nearby venue, with the same speakers, on August 15. In the event the only speaker to turn up was from HOI! because, just as we had predicted, after its carnival 'TTG' seems to have wound up. The meeting provoked the liveliest discussion in the branch for a long time, with both those sympathetic to the national liberation struggle in Ireland and those wishing to overturn the branch policy of support for HOI! freely debating the issue. It is clear from this and the management reaction that Ireland is an issue that really hits home. No militant should ignore this. No trade union branch can allow the subject of the Irish war to be proscribed, either by the bosses or by the bureaucrats. Take this attack on union democracy head on – sponsor HOI! and invite a speaker to your union branch.

The Nalgo pay dispute involving some 500,000 local government workers was the union's first national strike action. The fact that the employers sued for peace shows all too clearly that we have entered a new period, the period of defeat since 1979 is being left behind. It also showed that the main left organisations, above all the SWP, had no effective strategy independent of the trade union bureaucracy. It acted as a left advisor to the union bureaucrats throughout. Using the excuse of "exposing" the bureaucrats in front of the workers, the SWP in fact set no independent tasks. Instead it confined itself to making pious calls on the leadership, eg: "If the national leadership really came out and campaigned for an all out strike ... it could be won." (*Socialist Worker* July 29 1989). In other words, without the bureaucracy, the SWP is helpless. Some 'revolutionary party'? If a revolutionary organisation calls itself a party, then it should act like one. Instead of calling on the bureaucrats "to give us a serious lead" (to quote a speech by a leading SWP member at a London Nalgo rally) it should be putting itself forward as an alternative. Obviously the SWP is afraid of its 'party' pretensions being exposed.

Standing orders



Our £600 fund in July ended some £125 short. Dangerous, but not disastrous. So far in August things look slightly better. We've got £370 in so far. Particular thanks must go to comrade CC in Hertfordshire who sent in £50, comrade 1H in Scotland who donated £20 and comrade PV for a magnificent £200. Of course, as well as large occasional donations we need regular funds we can rely on. Standing orders are the best way of ensuring this. Comrades should instruct their banks to pay November Publications Ltd, account number 70487488, Co-operative Bank plc, 1, Islington High Street, London, N1 9TR, sorting code 08-90-33. Also let us know how much you are going to pay us. In this way we can plan ahead rather than holding our breath each month in the hope that we do not suffer too great a shortfall.

For the Party

Edited version of the speech made by comrade Jack Conrad in Central London on July 30 1989

DEAR COMRADES, we meet today not only to celebrate the end of our two month long Sixth Summer Offensive, but also, as 'veterans' of previous offensives will know, to mark the 69th anniversary of the founding of our Communist Party of Great Britain. As is our tradition we use these annual meetings as an opportunity to deal with some of the key issues of the day. Sometimes our remarks can be quite extensive. But on this occasion I will be somewhat brief.

Some in the 'official communist' movement have foolishly questioned our view that the Euro CPGB has been liquidated as any sort of communist party. They say that communists should continue to work in that organisation so that on some now undecided date it will be won to the banner of what they call 'Marxism-Leninism'.

Well, looking through the August edition of *Marxism Today* the other day I came across a quote from the *Sunday Times*. It read as follows: "The Communist Party has become a humane, democratic and constructive grouping whose views are always worth taking on board". I don't know who wrote this but I doubt very much that it was Martin Jacques – who is a regular columnist for the *seab* produced *Sunday Times* – giving his organisation a puff.

There is nothing at all wrong with *Marxism Today* quoting what the *Sunday Times* says about the Euro CPGB. But what it does say should send the alarm bells ringing in the head of any genuine communist in that organisation. When our enemy praises us in such a way we should not merely be asking very searching questions, there should be urgent calls, not least from the top, for a change of course. This is not the case. The quote was being used as the main text in the full page advert appealing for *Marxism Today* readers to join the "humane, democratic and constructive" ranks of the Euro CPGB!

If we wanted proof positive that what uses the title 'Executive Committee of the CPGB' is nothing more than a neo-Fabian rump, here it is. But having stated that the CPGB founded in 1920 has been liquidated, we must add that the numerous 'replacements' that have presented themselves over the last two decades or so are unable to come anywhere near exercising the role played by the CPGB even up until the early 1970s.

Frankly, none of the 'replacements' are able to exercise any sort of vanguard role in the working class. For all their claims to be parties the CPB, NCP, SWP, WRP, RCP et al are not parties at all but groups which exist on the fringes of the working class. When pressed, some of the more honest leaders of these groups will admit this – at least in private.

There are those who, recognising that revolutionary ideas are marginal in the working class movement in Britain, attempt to overcome the problem through burrowing deep into the Labour Party; this is the party now, according to the likes of *Socialist Organiser*, *Militant*, the Socialist League and a host of other Trotskyites. But what sort of party?

A bourgeois workers party. And our Labourised 'revolutionaries' have all become, to one degree or another, social democratised. The Labour Party inevitably changes those

who attempt to change it. It lets in, eats up and finally assimilates revolutionaries as if it were confronted with Sunday lunch. In fact without the steady supply of dedicated recruits provided by the entryists the Labour Party would hardly have any activists.

For revolutionaries, trying to transform the Labour Party is an act of suicide. Reformist organisations drain enthusiasm, dedication and class solidarity like vampires. At the end all that exists of those who entered the Labour Party determined to storm the heavens is a cynical reformist husk.

We Leninists have always insisted that the Labour Party cannot be changed into a rev-

I know from personal experience, and I'm sure other comrades do as well, that relatively large numbers of people who have come to hate capitalism decide on which revolutionary organisation to join on the basis of which has the most members. Inexcusably, this is something that a number of leaders actually encourage. I have been told too many times that *The Leninist* is wrong, not because of what we say on this, that or the other issue, but because we are not a big organisation.

We do not dismiss the question of size. Yet those organisations built on the basis of emphasising size end in disaster. Gerry Healy used to froth on about his "ten thousand fight-

ideology in the workers' movement in Britain. We never hear people criticise Neil Kinnock for his refusal to cooperate with *The Leninist* in building the Hands Off Ireland! anti-imperialist contingent on the August 12 'Time to Go' demonstration. Instead we hear criticisms of *The Leninist* for its refusal to meekly dissolve itself into Labourism.

History will judge us. But we are convinced that the task of revolutionaries is to cure workers of Labourism, not to become infected with it ourselves in some act of 'solidarity'.

If there is a 'theory' of going where the numbers are, or calling for everyone to unite, it is the 'theory' of building the party bottom up. We take an opposite position. As Lenin painstakingly explained, vanguard parties are built top down. They are built by fusing the most advanced revolutionary theory (Marxism) with the economic and political struggle of the working class. There are no short cuts. Jumping into the Labour Party or unity mongering are precisely that.

We take Lenin's method as our starting point. Because of this it is absolutely essential to recognise where we are now. Are we at the stage of fusing with the day to day struggles of the mass of workers or sorting things out at the top through winning the necessary battle of ideas?

Of course, no Chinese wall exists between the theory and practice. We have no time for academic 'Marxism'. Marxism is a guide to the revolutionary practice of the proletariat or it is nothing. Theory without practice is sterile. Those who sit in university common rooms and prattle on about 'theoretical practice' have no right whatsoever to call themselves Marxists.

But then, neither have those who have contempt for theory, who are only concerned with action. Unless the battle of ideas is won – at least to the degree where we have exposed other competing ideas as inadequate – any attempt to win the masses will end in utter disaster. As Lenin said, without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement.

We have certainly tried to take on board and develop the most advanced revolutionary theory: Marxism-Leninism. We have defended the fundamental truths of this scientific world outlook against the revisionists and opportunists which infest our workers' movement. We have also developed it in relation to theories of general crisis, socialist democracy and the nature of the period in which we are living.

As we have just said, Marxist theory must be linked to Marxist practice, and that means organisation. Naturally, at our present stage of development that organisation will not tend to be of a mass nature. Our organisation will be of a particular sort; designed to forge communists and designed as a form of political propaganda, through which we expose not so much the system but rather competing groups and trends.

For example, the Unemployed Workers Charter was set up at a time when, according to official government statistics at least, unemployment stood at around three million. The need for a mass fightback by unemployed and employed workers was obvious. Yet we did not set up the UWC with the immediate hope of forming the sort of unemployed

Doubled your money!

AS MEMBERS and supporters of *The Leninist* gathered on the evening of August 5 for our Sixth Summer Offensive celebration dinner and prize-giving we were able to announce that pledges had risen from £14,000 at the beginning of June to a magnificent £19,900 – within a hair's breadth of our bold £20,000 target (which has now been busted with a late, £200 donation). The fifth offensive in 1988 raised £10,473.09, so we have virtually doubled our total in one year, a proud achievement indeed! The new Summer Offensive trophy is held (for a year) by a comrade who raised £2,500. Art-work contributed by an Irish POW was awarded, for the greatest self sacrifice, to a

comrade who had put in consistent overtime throughout June and July, and a set of Lenin's Selected Works went to a comrade – also a member of the Workers Theatre Movement – who showed the greatest inventiveness in fund raising. Five comrades topped £1,000 this year. With no minimum target – to encourage newcomers – 15 comrades participated for the first time, raising between £100 and £750 each. A student raised over £500, a pensioner raised over £800 and three unemployed comrades raised over £700. Besides overtime, methods included sponsored swims and bike rides, a car boot sale, letting the spare room, Abbey National shares, badge making and T shirts sales.

utionary organisation, let alone a vanguard party. Life proves it. If we draw up a balance sheet on those who entered the Labour Party ten years ago, and all the effort and hard work they have put into their project of transforming it, we see that the entire left in the Labour Party is weaker, not stronger, and as a whole has moved to the right (even in social democratic terms).

Top down

The workers of Britain have no Communist Party, and for genuine revolutionaries getting one must be central. Without a Communist Party any gains that may be secured in the new, if tentative, wave of militancy we are seeing develop today will be lost tomorrow. The reason is simple. Without such a Party socialism will remain a hope, an aim, will never be made a reality. Capitalism will always seek to take back with one hand what it has given with the other. More, workers in Britain need a Communist Party if they are to survive. Only through liberating themselves from the shackles of decaying capitalist society can its impending general crisis and the danger of a new world war, a war which would threaten the survival of civilization, be avoided.

There are no short cuts to a Communist Party. It will not come through building up the largest left organisations. Nor will it come through simply calling upon everyone to unite. Communist parties are not about quantity, they are about quality.

ers for Trotskyism". But as soon as they were put to the test in the miners' Great Strike his organisation shattered. Opportunist hype about being the biggest can produce recruits, but never communists, let alone a Communist Party.

What about unity? It's a slogan that no-one should be able to object to. That is, except the most narrow minded sectarians. We should forget our differences, they are secondary. Instead we should all join together and fight Thatcher. This is the natural view of many who are new to politics. They don't see what the fuss is all about. Looking around the left they are confronted with a luxuriant proliferation of groups, an abundance of publications, with for them mere hair splitting differences that keep everyone apart. Surely if all the energy put into all the little projects were to be unified then we would stand a chance of beating Thatcher, or so they say.

Objectively such pleas for unity play a diversionary role. We have to patiently explain why we say this. Working class unity around the principles of Marxism-Leninism is essential if we are ever to realise socialism in Britain. But calls for unity for unity's sake are, in the final analysis, calls to join the Labour Party, where, we are told, the workers are. The irony is of course that having joined the Labour Party the new recruits find precious few 'genuine workers' but a plethora of entryists, all bitterly disappointed by the paucity of proletarians.

Unity for unity's sake calls are also invariably one way. We revolutionaries are meant to adapt ourselves to the existing, reformist,

workers' movement we saw in the 1930s.

Principally we aimed to show what was necessary and to actively campaign for it. The UWC fights for a mass movement against unemployment and stands on the basic principles of such a movement: the elementary right of workers to work, a right which we say if capitalism cannot grant, then it should go.

We have been alone in this practice. Those who boast about their thousands of members; those who in the early 1970s – when unemployment was 'only' one million – organised right to work marches; those who parade their links with those on top of the official labour movement, with its massive full time bureaucracy and millions of pounds worth of resources, have abandoned the unemployed.

And no wonder. The opportunists have found that the unemployed are too hot to handle. Instead of being polite and falling into line behind the 'bishops to brickies' politics of the Euro organisers of the Peoples March for Jobs, the unemployed dared to shout anti-Tory slogans! Instead of silently trailing behind Norman Willis, as the Walworth Road mafia ordered on the Jarrow '86 march into London, the unemployed took up the militant slogans of the UWC. Likewise when the same Labourites staged the pathetic Hands Across Britain stunt, along with reactionaries such as the bejewelled media 'personality' Jimmy Saville, the unemployed, led by the UWC, staged militant protests against being used as objects of middle class charity mongering.

As we have said, the UWC has raised a burning demand *in practice* which lies at the heart of the struggle of the working class in decaying capitalism, the right to work. What it has shown *in practice* is that the Labour Party and the TUC are not on the side of the working class, that they are on the side of the bourgeoisie. In the process of such activity we have exposed not only the Labourites and 'official communists' but all varieties of petty bourgeois revolutionism such as Trotskyism, which is for ever telling the labour bureaucracy what to do but never dares do anything itself.

Hands Off Ireland! has played a similar role. This year is the twentieth anniversary of British troops being sent onto the streets of the Six Counties. Some Labour leftists have used the occasion to boost their militant credentials by fronting 'Time to Go'.

'Time to Go' could not be allowed to go unchallenged. Any demonstration on Ireland that promises to be two, let alone four or five thousand strong demands active intervention by anyone who is a genuine supporter of Ireland's liberation. What is demanded is that revolutionaries intervene to turn the demonstration on its head. That it goes from an attempt to present a Labour government as the key to Ireland's freedom to being a genuine anti-imperialist manifestation.

To do that it was absolutely necessary to organise as large as possible an anti-imperialist contingent. It was with this at the front of our minds that we launched Hands Off Ireland!

What sort of response did our call meet in the revolutionary movement? We found refusal on the one hand and excuses on the other. Ten years ago there was another 'Time to Go' demonstration. Then organisations such as the SWP and the IMG (which limps on as the Socialist League and a couple or so splits) insisted, quite rightly, that they would only march as a distinct anti-imperialist contingent. How times have changed! Now it seems that *The Leninist* is almost alone in taking this stand. Certainly our organisation is alone in singlemindedly fighting *in practice* for such a contingent.

While 'revolutionaries' such as the SWP buddy buddy with professional reformists like Peter Hain and Clare Short, Hands Off Ireland! has organised two national speaking tours promoting the anti-imperialist contingent. While Labourites such as the Trotskyite Workers Power organisation have talked about the need for an anti-imperialist contingent but refused to stand on the broad and principled position of Hands Off Ireland!, we have got on with the work. While some who say Ireland is the key to the British revolution do nothing to challenge 'Time to Go', Hands Off Ireland! has published a paper along with a whole range of other promotional material designed to do precisely that in practice.

We have also exposed in practice the RCP, which has taken a stupid boycott position. The RCP argues itself into absurdity. Short, Hain, the SWP et al have invented the twentieth anniversary of the intervention of British troops in an effort to undermine their Irish Freedom Movement demonstration! Gerry Adams is part of a Labour conspiracy against the IFM! We'll march and build for the small

Labourite organised Bloody Sunday demonstration every year, but not the big Labourite organised 'Time to Go' demonstration! This silliness goes hand in hand with a truly cretinous claim that the official labour movement is "dead"! As we have said before, those whom the gods wish to destroy ...

Philistines

Listening to what I've just been talking about, some philistines, certainly those new to politics, will no doubt find such an approach 'sectarian' in the extreme. After all, we make no secret of the fact that the UWC has been effective, not so much in organising tens of thousands of unemployed workers but in exposing the Labour Party; that HOI! has not so much run guns to the IRA, as did the young CPGB, but rather exposed both the Labour left and the likes of the SWP and the RCP. But the fact of the matter is that our practice is completely removed from sectarianism.

We don't fight other groups for narrow sectarian reasons. We put the long term interests of the working class above everything else. Because we have this commitment we pose *what is necessary* to further the class interests of the proletariat, and ruthlessly seek to expose those who are willing to compromise with *what is* in order to seek short term advantage for themselves. Unless this internal battle within the revolutionary movement is fought out and won, the revolutionary movement has no hope of scoring a decisive victory over the ruling class in Britain.

Those who accuse us of sectarianism in effect accuse Lenin of sectarianism. Our method is the method of Lenin. To his opponents he was a 'sectarian' *par excellence*, not least to some very talented unity mongers of his day such as Leon Trotsky. He simply wanted the revolutionary Bolsheviks to unite with the opportunist Mensheviks. Correctly, he always saw Lenin as the principle barrier to a unity scheme, not Martov, Axelrod and other Menshevik leaders.

From 1903 until 1917 Trotsky was the most fervent of those who insisted that Lenin and the Bolsheviks compromise with the Mensheviks, whose politics were in the last analysis compromised with the bourgeoisie, whom they looked upon as the source of social progress in Russia. Frankly, the modern day Trotskyites, with their love of the Labour Party, are little different. But before coming back to modern day Britain let us reinforce our point by examining the record of perhaps the most famous revolutionary paper of all time, *Iskra*.

Here we can cite, this time approvingly, one of its youthful contributors, Leon Trotsky. He put his finger on a profound truth when he unashamedly admitted, years later, that *Iskra* hardly ever bothered to commission articles which denounced the Tsar and the evils of Tsarism. That was taken as read. What *Iskra* devoted its time to was ruthless critique of the existing revolutionary trends and their inadequacies. It asked the 60,000 ruble question of how the Tsarist regime was to be overthrown and showed that the revolutionary movement as then organised was incapable of carrying out that task. *Iskra* had the answer. What was needed was an ideologically monolithic party based on the strictest centralism and unity of will.

Trotsky made the point that, for the philistine, *Iskra*'s polemics seemed hairsplitting and sectarian. This was not the case. As with *The Leninist*, *Iskra* respected the revolutionary self sacrifice of opponents. But what *Iskra* attacked at the end of the day was the waste of revolutionary energy and the squandering of revolutionary enthusiasm.

To be any sort of a revolutionary is a worthy thing. It is not done to gain popularity or gain promotion. It has a detrimental effect on personal life, it causes all sorts of problems. But simply sacrificing oneself for the sake of it is futile. To paraphrase General Patton, we don't want revolutionaries to die for the revolution, we want them to live for it.

Before *Iskra*, revolutionaries a plenty were sacrificed in vain. Revolutionary committees had a life measured in weeks rather than months before the Tsarist secret police, the Okhrana, penetrated them and packed them off to the bleak wilderness of Siberia.

Lenin suffered this fate. But he learned the lesson. On his return from exile he had a worked out plan for a highly centralised party, moving around a single will. It was to be constructed on the basis of organising around an all-Russia paper (*Iskra*) which would be published abroad to avoid the avenging arm of the Tsarist state.

The fight to turn this idea into practice

earned all sorts of abuse and accusations against "dictator" "Maximilian Lenin" (as Trotsky put it in his 1904 anti-Leninist diatribe, *Our political tasks*). But Lenin was right to insist on the highest degree of centralism. He was determined to smash Tsarism, not to provide the Siberian prison regime with more martyrs. That's why he attacked other groups who squandered revolutionaries and revolutionary energy.

The fact of the matter is that what separates us from the existing groups on the left in Britain is not bloody minded sectarianism. What separates us is just as important as what separated Lenin and the Bolsheviks from the Bundists, the Mensheviks, the Trotskyites, the liquidators, the legal 'Marxists', the Social Revolutionaries, ie the swarm of opportunist organisations and trends with which the Bolsheviks had to compete. Only in hindsight is everyone a Bolshevik.

What separates us from the rest of the left in Britain is not the wish to see socialism, rather their fundamentally flawed theoretical positions which inevitably produce wrong approaches to practice. And who can doubt that wrong practice can do nothing to help us realise our common goal of socialism. Wrong theory leads to wrong practice and thus squanders revolutionary energy and self sacrifice. We do not have the time today for an exhaustive analysis. Instead a few examples will have to suffice.

Apart from those who have cravenly submerged themselves into Labourism, or, like the Euros, full blown bourgeois politics, a number of groups maintain an independent existence. Giving their central theoretical positions the once over, it is clear that this is their only virtue.

According to the WRP there is a revolutionary situation, a revolutionary situation that has existed since at least the early 1970s! Again, according to the WRP (which incidentally supports the medievalist regime in Tehran) there is not a relatively stable bourgeois democracy in Britain. No, there is a "Bonapartist dictatorship". As with other Trotskyites, the WRP seems to label almost everything and anybody 'Bonapartist'. It does, after all, save them concretely examining concrete situations.

Then we have the SWP. It described the miners' Great Strike of 1984-5 as an "extreme example of the downturn", which it says spanned the whole of the 1980s. We call this an extreme example of self fulfilling defeatism. The SWP opposes rank and file organisation, it opposes workers' violence, it opposes the posing before workers of basic democratic demands like the demand for self determination for Ireland.

On a wider scale, the SWP has never broken from its theory that capitalism had overcome its periodic general crises through the "permanent arms economy", in spite of all evidence to the contrary. With similar theoretical 'sophistication' it considers the socialist states to be no different from South Africa, the USA or Spain: ie capitalist. Why? Because they, like all capitalist states, produce a 'surplus'. This would make ancient Rome, feudal England and the communist society of the future 'capitalist', but no matter, if it prevents the SWP from being tainted by any association with living socialism.

The RCP has its origins in the SWP and, like its parent, does not consider that the epoch of wars and revolutions has produced anything worth defending. Where the proto SWP trod in 1950, its former Trotskyite Opposition goes today. Tony Cliff gave up all pretence of defending the socialist states, what Lenin called the "the living embodiment of the victory over capitalism on a world scale", under the propaganda barrage launched by the bourgeoisie during the Korean War.

All it took for his epigone Frank Richards to arrive at the same conclusion was western 'horror' at the clamp down in China. Richards and his RCP now declare that they will "support every movement" against the socialist states "regardless of their political programme". This must presumably include Pamyat, Solidarnosc and the Mujahedin. And to prove that the RCP can outdo the SWP in defeatism, not only abroad but also at home, it insists that the official labour movement is "dead" and that the "new mood" it says exists in Britain has its origins in middle class discontent, not growing working class confidence.

These positions, in their own way, parallel the positions of the opponents of Bolshevism. Certainly no Leninist should deny the necessity of defeating our opportunists, just as the Bolsheviks defeated theirs. The positions of our opponents flow from both simple theoretical wrongheadedness and, more import-

antly, adaptation to the dominant culture in Britain ie, bourgeois culture.

They attempt to get by on one dimensional anti-capitalism. Recruits are made on the basis of gut hatred of capitalism. But while this can be articulated into some sort of coherence, it is never developed to the point of a consistent communist programme. The result is on the one hand tailing Labourism and on the other an infantile dismissal of Labourism, even declarations that it is 'dead' or that there is a revolutionary situation when there isn't, or some other such thing.

It is in struggle against this morass that *The Leninist* will reforge the CPGB, just as Lenin in effect reformed the RSDLP through *Iskra*'s struggle against the morass of legal socialists, populists, economists and separatists. We will take on and defeat our main opportunist trends, not least left Labourism (I include here *Militant*, *Socialist Organiser* etc as well as Benn, Livingstone and Co) because we, like Lenin, want to see socialism.

Of course, it cannot be emphasised too strongly that the CPGB which our class needs will not only be reformed *against* others, it will also be reformed *for* the organisation around *The Leninist*. That neatly brings me to the state of our organisation.

Weaknesses and strengths

Here I will be even briefer. This is best done by dealing with our weaknesses and strengths. Stalin made the point that once the political line is decided cadre decide everything. Our biggest weakness is lack of cadre, ie a lack of communists who are steeled in theory and practice and devote their lives, not merely their spare time, to the revolution.

We will not easily overcome this weakness. It takes many years to really make a communist. So this lack of cadre will continue to hold back our work and pace of development. Naturally we are not blasé. Quite rightly we continue to place great emphasis on the education of our comrades, both in the classics of Marxism-Leninism and the burning issues of the day. We also quite rightly emphasise practice as a means of firming comrades up.

This already brings me to our strengths. We set the aim last year of learning politics. Education was the top priority. But where 1988 was a year of education, we decided that 1989 was to be the year of organisation. The year of organisation is a year which is obviously far from completed. Yet already we have notched up significant successes.

Our organisation has created waves, and at least to some extent determined the agenda, on major issues such as unemployment and Ireland, in a way beyond what our size would suggest is possible. As part of our year of organisation we also put forward the aim that every member would be integrated into a cell, a cell that would be self activating and capable of initiative. Comrades, this has been achieved, along with a doubling of our ranks and preparations for 1990, when we will prioritise spreading our organisation to cities outside London.

Perhaps our greatest strength, though, is the seriousness and discipline of which our comrades are capable. Ideological conviction is crucial here and reaches its pinnacle for two months every year in the form of our Summer Offensive. No other organisation could do what we've done in the Summer Offensive. It really tests our strength.

I must admit that when we decided to double the target for 1989 compared with the figure we raised in 1988 I knew we were taking a risk. Although we had doubled our membership, we had achieved that through integrating in existing supporters. Nonetheless the risk was obviously worth taking.

We have stretched ourselves and immensely strengthened our convictions. Comrades, all the indications are that we will bust through the £20,000 target. Already total pledges amount to £19,500. A splendid achievement.

Of course, the Summer Offensive is not only about making the money necessary to finance our organisation. It is also, indeed it is above all, a means of making communists. All those who have fought to see the Sixth Summer Offensive to success have developed themselves as revolutionaries and true communists. All comrades will know how hard it has been to raise our pledges. But also all comrades have learned. Learned how to go out, how to be inventive, how to be single-minded. In the process what becomes obvious is the far greater level of achievement of which we are capable.

- Victory to the Sixth Summer Offensive!
- On to the Seventh!

Labour, Rushdie and separate education

Quick off the mark as ever, it seems that the WRP (Workers Press) has taken over the Kilburn branch of the torpid Troops Out Movement. Having done this it resolved, contrary to TOM nationally, that Kilburn TOM would march on the August 5 Irish Freedom Movement demo. In true sectarian style, TOM dissolved the branch. Unperturbed, these bold remnants of Gerry Healy's "ten thousand fighters for Trotskyism" won a sharp internal battle for Kilburn TOM to flaunt its own banner on August 5, and national TOM could go hang. Quite right too - except that our happy band of few didn't actually get round to making themselves the banner which all the fuss was about. Thus Kilburn TOM makes the history books, as the first one to be disbanded for good intentions. And you know what they say about the road to hell, comrades.

The Darby and Joan 'official communists' of the New Communist Party are raising a little petty cash from a walk through the Peak District. In the New Worker of August 11 we find a picture of the NCP's intrepid walkers about to embark, over the caption of 'not quite over the hill yet'. Really?

Some people never learn. This month's Workers Power has an editorial on the Labour Party, something close to the hearts of its supporters. "When an election comes", say these entrists, "we may have to put the Labour Party to test in office". Really? This must be in case some workers, somewhere, believe that Kinnock is kidding when he reels off all the anti-worker measures he will take in No10. Workers Power, bless 'em, aim to prove that he's as good as his word. But then, when haven't they advocated that this reactionary party be 'tested' in this way?

Gorbachevism continues to 'enrich the armoury of Marxism-Leninism' in its own inimitable way - by dumping it. In Soviet Weekly of July 22, historian Vladlen Sirokin argues that, far from NEP being a temporary and necessary retreat, it was Lenin's rectification of "the theoretical faults of the Marxist model of socialism" and economist B Pinsker informs us "that money circulation and the price system are the backbone of any economy." How long can it be before we're being told that the struggle between socialism and capitalism is all a semantic debate?



Dewsbury: workers' unity, not separatism, is the way to fight back

One cannot be a democrat and at the same time advocate the principle of segregating schools. Certainly from the working class point of view we emphatically oppose separate education

IT WAS on bookshop shelves months before any protest was seen. Before its general release copies were dispatched to all the major muslim religious centres. No protests came forth. Yet, when 'blasphemy' was 'discovered', the fact that Salman Rushdie is an ex-muslim and a westernised rationalist made him the perfect target for fundamentalist hate.

In war ruined Iran the medievalist regime stage-managed protests against Rushdie as a way of diverting mass discontent. Likewise for the mullahs in Britain his book *Satanic Verses* was, so to speak, a godsend. When you cut away all the religious hocus pocus objections to the text, *Satanic Verses* is simply a vehicle for muslim leaders to assert their political influence, particularly over youth, through the campaign for separate schools. If Rushdie hadn't written it they would have been forced to invent it.

That is why it is beholden on all democrats to stand four square in defence of Rushdie and not to give an inch to calls for censorship or widening of the blasphemy laws. We must condemn the anti-Rushdie protests and not be waylaid for one moment by cynical accusations of racism or any such nonsense.

We certainly do not call for the arming of reactionary muslims, as the Labourite Workers Power Group seems to do in the July edition of its paper. 'Self defence' of the 'black community' is a class issue. We are for self defence against fascist and police attack but opposed to 'self defence' against 'blasphemy'.

Of course, what Workers Power and other Labour Party loyalists are concerned about is maintaining

the votes of the muslim population. In reality for Workers Power, just like Kinnock, the whole Rushdie affair represents a danger to the Labour Party and its chances at the next general election. This produces the most obscene cowardice.

The Labour Party leadership has kept its head well and truly down over Rushdie. Kinnock was even embarrassed to admit that he had recently met him (accidentally as it turned out). Other members of the Labour Party have been no better, indeed some have been worse. Far worse.

Roy Hattersley has argued against the publication of a paperback version of the best selling book, while Leicester East MP, Keith Vaz has put himself at the head of a 3,000 strong book burning demonstration! Indeed, so concerned are Labour leftists that their party might lose votes over Rushdie that they are prepared to echo the separatist demands of the mosque, not least on the question of education.

Christian cult schools, which get an 85% spending grant from the government and are a well established component of the education system in Britain, provide the model for the sort of thing the reactionary muslims are after. Far from countering such demands with the demand for the end of all religious schools, Labour leaders have lined up with the mosque.

Labour's education spokesman, Jack Straw, has argued that "what is good enough for the catholics, is equally valid for the muslims". Of course, what he means by this is not that all children should get a good secular education. Instead he wants Asian youth to be left victim to muslim teachers and their irra-

tionalist beliefs, just as he is content to subject children to the hateful beliefs of half educated nuns and twisted, sexually frustrated priests.

With rampant racism and the widespread conception that education standards are falling, the idea of separate schools has become popular among some black parents and teachers. The Asian 'community', because it is relatively well organised, articulates this more effectively than those from an historical Americo-African origin.

The mullahs know that children brought up in the state system will, whatever its huge shortcomings, come to question the reactionary doctrines of the mosque. Having their own schools would give them the possibility of sealing off 'their' children, especially the girls, from secular notions and influences. Separate schools would reinforce the traditionalist muslim view of women, with all the reactionary consequences that would have.

Nonetheless Labour, which lyingly boasts of its commitment to women's rights (it even promises to set up a token 'Ministry of Women' if it was to get into government) goes along with it. A number of Labour MPs have done a complete summersault over segregated schools. Hattersley, Madden and Grant, for instance, were only a short time ago all opposed to separate muslim schools. But since the anti-*Satanic Verses* campaign they have come full circle.

We communists take a completely opposite stand. We have always stood for the full integration of the working class. We stand against all divisions of the class along religious, national, sex or sexual orientation lines. The

idea of separate schools is a bourgeois one which is not at all permissible from the point of view of democracy, let alone the working class.

As long as different nationalities live in a single state they are bound together by countless economic, legal and social bonds. Education cannot be left to each national or religious 'community'. If people are tied together economically, then any attempt to divide them permanently through separate education is as absurd as it is reactionary. All efforts should be made to unite nationalities in education matters, so that schools are a preparation for what actually exists in real life.

At the present there can be no question that migrant nationalities are disadvantaged because of language and cultural level, etc. Because of this, attempts to separate people on the basis of origin, religion, nationality etc can only worsen the relatively backward position of the oppressed.

In South Africa education is separated, inevitably to the disadvantage of the black masses. In Britain it is not only petty bourgeois Americo-African and Asian migrants who want separation but, above all, fascists like the National Front and their more respectable white supremacist co-thinkers.

In their campaign to secure state funding for the Zakaria Muslim Girls school in Kirklees, the Asian parents have won the backing of Parents Alliance for Choice in Education, which was set up by the right wing Freedom Association. The same body also backed the twenty-six white racist parents who refused to send their children to a local primary school in Dewsbury, because it was overwhelmingly Asian.

The capitalists the world over are increasingly integrated. Who has not heard of 1992 by now, and all socialists know that such a coming together is ultimately directed against the working class, irrespective of nationality. Who does not know that, from the giant factories and offices of the transnationals to the local DHSS office, we always, without exception, see an ever larger number of nationalities among the workers, certainly compared with the sleepy rural villages and comfortable commuter land of Torydom.

Through their life experience, advanced proletarians instinctively and inevitably realise that the unity of workers is essential. And what goes for the workplace goes for the education of their children. Separating schools according to nationality, race or religion would not only increase racist prejudices a hundred fold, but also strengthen the hand of the ruling class.

The children of the bourgeoisie go to the mixed Eton and Oxford, Harrow and Cambridge. Our children should enjoy the same facilities and the same opportunity to overcome all narrow prejudices. We Leninists have opposed separatism in all its forms and will continue to argue that only the best is good enough for our class.

Tony Coughlin

REVIEWS

Foot in mouth

Paul Foot, *Ireland: Why Britain must get out*, Chatto Counter Blasts No2, Chatto and Windus, London 1989, pp69, £2.99

DURING the past twenty years much rubbish has been published by representatives of various left groups on Ireland; Foot's book is one of the worst. Its only good point is its length: it's mercifully short.

Foot shows himself up as a social liberal with the most 'naive illusions' in British imperialism and the British imperialist Labour Party. According to Foot the partition of Ireland was a *mistaken policy* forced upon Britain by the Loyalists. Since then the British ruling class has '**not had the guts to admit that the partition of Ireland and the creation of the Orange state was a monstrous and cynical mistake, which must be put right**' (p55).

For him Britain has not been trying to crush a revolutionary situation, it is to be pitied. '**In the summer of 1972**', Foot writes, '**the British government finally lost patience with the Northern Ireland government, and declared direct rule from Westminster**' (p42). Poor misguided and long suffering Britain.

If only the British government could be made to see sense, everything would be okay. That's the line of Paul Foot. British imperialism has, of course, plenty of guts. It singlemindedly maintains partition, which from its point of view was not a 'mistake', rather the way it preserves its domination of the whole of Ireland.

Unlike Foot, British imperialism fully realises that an Ireland reunited through revolutionary action would be no haven of capitalist stability. It fears another Cuba triggering off a revolutionary explosion at home. Ireland has been interlinked with Britain over many centuries. It is all too close, and the populations of the two nations speak the same language and share a similar culture and physiology. On the political Richter scale a blow struck against British imperialism in Ireland would have a thousand times the impact made by the loss of colonies such as India, Nigeria or South Yemen.

Foot, though, is not looking for a revolutionary solution to the 'Irish question'. At heart he is a lily livered reformist. By casting Loyalism as the main villain, Foot excuses the crimes of British imperialism and suggests it can (indeed should) play a progressive role.

Such an approach made Foot a perfect spokesperson for the 'Time to Go' campaign. Set up to get Britain to see sense, 'Time to Go' played an objectively pro-imperialist role, painting Britain just as much a victim as Ireland.

For 'Time to Go' and Foot, a withdrawal movement can be built simply by tapping into the existing (bourgeois) consciousness of the British population. Foot cites opinion poll findings which show an overwhelming desire to get the troops out. But this is dangerous. Opinion polls also show the reactionary reasons why the British public wants withdrawal. Commonly expressed views like 'let the Paddies fight it out' or 'tow the Irish into the Atlantic and drown the lot of 'em', do not provide the foundations for any sort of anti-imperialist movement.

That is why *The Leninist* spon-

sored the formation of Hands Off Ireland! to directly challenge 'Time to Go' and its reactionary politics. A mass movement is certainly needed. But there are no short cuts. Calls for us to get together with the Labour left and neo-Fabians, or to cobble together a do nothing alliance with opportunist microsects, must and will be firmly resisted.

For communists — unlike the SWP Foot — a solidarity movement with Ireland (or any other oppressed nation for that matter) is fought for in the context of, and as a component part of, the struggle for revolution in Britain. This and only this is the communist line. To reduce solidarity down to the level of trying to make Britain see sense, even acting as an auxiliary for the nationalist forces in Ireland, has nothing to do with the communist approach to politics.

Tailing public opinion is the road to disaster, a diversion from the necessary though gruelling task of challenging and then changing the existing consciousness which exists in the working class of Britain. Our task — particularly when it comes to Ireland — is to win workers to communist consciousness.

Where we link building a solidarity movement (in fact, where we link all our work) to revolution, and the building of a genuine Communist Party, the SWP Foot monstrously speculates on the possibility of Britain playing a progressive role in Ireland. Where we call for Britain to be defeated and withdraw on the skids of its helicopters, Foot pathetically urges the Tory government to end discrimination, bad housing and even disband the hated RUC and UDR. Where we see socialism in Britain coming as a victory over Labourism, Foot looks to the Labour Party, not only in 'Time to Go', but also in government (the SWP will automatically and loyally vote for and work for the 'next Labour government').

No wonder Foot's criticism of the Labour Party's role in the Irish War is mild indeed. In fact he is full of sympathy. For example, when Foot writes about 1968, when nationalists refused to be ruled in the old way, and when the rulers could no longer rule in the old way, he regrets the fact that the imperialist Labour government '**determined to deal with the problem by reforming the state, not ending it**' (p38). The inference is clear. Labour could, if it had had the will, acted differently. The SWP calls this utopian nonsense political realism. We have a better word for it — opportunism.

Tony Coughlin

Time to act

Workers Theatre Movement, *Twenty years*, contact WTM for performances and/or affiliation at: BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX (01-431 3135)

IN ORDER to challenge the openly pro-imperialist orientation of the 'Time To Go' march on August 12 and its Labourite organisers who bank on a future Kinnock government withdrawing British troops from Ireland, the Workers Theatre Movement commissioned a piece on Ireland from one of its members.

The central message of *Twenty years* is simple but hard hitting. If you want to get British imperialism out of Ireland then you must support the two basic democratic demands of 'troops out now!' and 'self determination for the Irish na-

Not surprisingly, even within the WTM these two basic democratic demands were questioned. In many ways it was to be expected that the arguments within the group would reflect the backward and cowardly ideas peddled by opportunists and pro-imperialists alike.

WTM members had numerous discussions on the politics of the piece, its central objectives and its likely impact. Arguments particularly centred on what self determination meant in practice. Several members of the group, while accepting 'self determination for the Irish people' in 'theory', found great difficulty in committing themselves to doing the piece, because of its insistence that workers in Britain must take sides with Irish people against the British state.

Other members of the group close to *The Leninist* argued that the very demand for self determination meant in practice giving unconditional support to the methods that the Irish people feel fit to use in their struggle to defeat British imperialism.

Although the group only had a short time to work on the piece, the political discussions that raged were no diversion. After all, if the piece could not win members of the group to a principled position on Ireland, what chance would it have in the real world of the British labour movement, fed as it is on a staple diet of hatred for the IRA and pro-imperialism?

The debates paid off. After continued discussion, several members of the group who had earlier stated reservations about the piece, commenced work on it. Having won a sufficient number of the group to the need to perform the piece, the struggle was on to develop the dramatic structures that would make it work.

On one level, this problem had been simplified by the writer, who had adapted it from a 1932 piece called *Meerut*, written in solidarity with a group of trade unionists who had been imprisoned for daring to set up a trade union, in yet another of Britain's colonies, India.

The method of the piece is essentially a collective speech. Irish political prisoners develop their case by debunking, one after another, the lies and myths which have been deployed by the imperialists throughout the war. The prisoners argue forcefully why there can be no British solution in Ireland, that it was always time to go. They conclude by making a direct appeal to workers in Britain to unite their power '**with the Irish liberation fighters**'. For, as the piece states, '**unless you do, you forge your own chains**'.

Proof of the pudding is, as the old saying goes, in the eating. *Twenty years* was performed twice at the IFM demonstration and received a splendid reception. Those attending this march had no problems with its hard hitting anti-imperialism and hostility to the imperialist practice of the Labour Party.

What about the objectively pro-imperialist organisers of 'Time To Go'? We staged *Twenty years* twice at the 'Time To Go' demonstration a week after the IFM demonstration. Here there was trouble with the organisers, but not the audience. The chief steward even attempted to interrupt the piece half way through. He failed. And such was the reaction of the assembled crowd (and press attention) that he had the cheek to thank the WTM for its performance.

For the WTM and its *Twenty years* such two faced praise is praise indeed.

Paul Harrington
(WTM Secretary)

ACTION

THE LENINIST

London Seminars, 5pm Sundays. Details: 01-431 3135. Current series:

- The Communist Party and the Working Class: August 27: What balance should there be between centralism and democracy in a communist organisation? (September 3: No seminar. UWC pre-lobby concert and send-off.) September 10: If communism is inevitable, why do communists stress the need for discipline and self-sacrifice?

Manchester Readers' Group Meetings, 7.30pm Fridays, Gulliver's pub, Oldham Street, Manchester M1. August 25: Why we need a communist alternative. How will it be built?

UWC

Thursday August 31 to Monday September 4: UWC march on the TUC, Manchester to Blackpool. Lobby of TUC, 8am Monday September 4. Smash ET! No Slave Labour! Organise the Unemployed!

Thursday August 31, Manchester: Send off to marchers, 6.30pm Albert Square, in front of Manchester Town Hall. Performance by Workers Theatre Movement.

Friday September 1, Bolton: UWC public meeting, 7.30pm Socialist Club, 16, Wood Street. Speakers: Joe Kay, Mark Fischer, plus Workers Theatre Movement.

Saturday September 2, Preston: UWC public meeting, 7.30pm, venue to be announced. Speakers: Mark Fischer, plus Workers Theatre Movement.

Sunday September 3, London: UWC concert and send-off for lobbyists, 8pm to 12 midnight, Red Rose Club, 127, Seven Sisters Road, N7 (Finsbury Park tube). Music/comedy/theatre/disco. Thrum (acoustic guitar band). Workers Theatre Movement will perform three pieces: 'Three frames and two pictures', 'Twenty Years' and a new piece on unemployment. Also disco, and more acts to come. £5 waged, £2 unwaged by ticket, or at the door, including coach seat if required. Coaches leave for Blackpool at midnight, returning to London 7.30pm Monday.

Monday September 4, Blackpool: UWC lobby of the TUC, 8am sharp until 11am. Fringe meeting: 12 noon, Claremont Hotel, 270, North Promenade. Speakers include Ernie Roberts MP (Honorary President of the UWC), Phil Griffin and Mark Fischer.

Manchester: Organising meetings for the march on the TUC, 7pm every Monday, Committee Room 4, Manchester Town Hall, Albert Square.

Saturdays: 10am sale/collection in Market Street.

Money: Besides ticket sales and £20 sponsorships, UWC is appealing for '100 tenner' and aiming to collect £1,000 on the street (or workplace) before the lobby.

HOI!

The Hands Off Ireland! conference on Sunday August 13 decided to continue the campaign on the basis of the slogans, 'Troops Out Now!' and 'Self determination for the Irish nation!'. An organising committee of seven was elected and a programme of future campaigning agreed (See the back page). Hands Off Ireland! has groups in London, Manchester and Shetland which hold regular meetings and organise activities in their areas, as well as building for major events. Wherever you are, get active with HOI!. Phone us for further details and affiliate to HOI!, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. (Organisations: national £25, regional £25, local £10. Individuals: £5 waged, £2.50 unwaged). Watch this space for future meetings and activities.

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Hands Off Ireland!



THERE can be no neutrals in the Irish war. Standing on the sidelines condemning all violence equates the attacks of the oppressors with the resistance of the oppressed. Are you for the IRA or for British imperialism?

Communists have no doubts with whom we side in this war: with the oppressed against their oppressors. There can be no other way of mobilising workers in Britain in solidarity with the Irish people. 'From bishops to brickies' type campaigns which seek to play to the lowest common denominator, appealing for a British withdrawal in the interests of the British state, have always fallen by the wayside or shattered at the first serious test.

But for twenty years the British left has done just this. The 'Time To Go' campaign actually looked to the British state to provide a solution in Ireland. Leading 'Time To Go' supporter and SWP member Paul Foot wrote that "Britain should set an irrevocable date for that withdrawal and at once convene a constitutional conference at an international level to determine how best that withdrawal can be accomplished" (*Ireland: Why Britain must get out*). The state that has terrorised the Irish people, then, is supposed to set things right for them. They remain, in Foot and 'Time To Go's little scenario, passive bystanders while British imperialism decides how and when it will withdraw. 'Time To Go' turns reality on its head by arguing that

is instead *the* solution.

The sort of 'withdrawal' that genuine anti-imperialists want to see in Ireland is the sort that was forced on the US in Vietnam – running out defeated by a victorious people. That is why we demand troops out now.

To argue for a graduated (ie, conditional) withdrawal is to argue that British imperialism can have some kind of a progressive role to play now. It cannot; in Ireland or, for that matter, in Britain. The best thing for both the Irish people and workers in Britain would be for British imperialism in Ireland to be smashed. That must be the perspective of any genuine solidarity movement with the Irish struggle in Britain today.

'Time To Go' talked of 'twenty wasted years'. If there have been twenty wasted years, they have not been wasted for the state, of which 'TTG' seeks to act as the liberal conscience, but in building a mass solidarity movement with the Irish people against the British state. They are years wasted through demoralising, non-starter and ultimately pro-imperialist campaigns such as 'TTG'. Do we really want to be marking 'thirty wasted years' in another decade?

The 'time to go' is now. It always has been. The time to build a movement for a British defeat in Ireland is now. In doing so we must settle accounts with those sections of the workers' movement whose theory and practice have been a block to this. 'Time To Go' is an example of this. Instead of building Irish solidarity, because of

its political basis it actually derails it. This must be challenged so that the alternative can be built.

Hands Off Ireland! was established last September to do just this. Open to all anti-imperialists and anti-imperialist organisations, the aim of Hands Off Ireland! was an anti-imperialist contingent on the August 12 'TTG' demonstration.

On the day it was a great success. In contrast to the Labourites and SWPers who seemed more interested in chatting to friends than expressing solidarity with the forces of national liberation in Ireland, even before the march set off HOI! kept up a militant barrage of slogans demanding 'Troops Out Now!' and proclaiming 'For the IRA, against the British Army!'

This was clearly unpopular with the organisers, who tried to force us to the back of the march as it moved off, as well as attempting to disrupt the Workers Theatre Movement performance of the sketch *Twenty Years*, which hammered home the same point in agit-prop form. They failed. Over 100 people marched in the tightly organised contingent, along with many hundreds of others in different sections of the demonstration who carried Hands Off Ireland! placards. The worry of some that Hands Off Ireland! would not be distinct enough from the 'TTG' element proved unfounded.

At the end of the march the HOI! contingent peeled off and held a short rally with speakers from Hands Off Ireland!, Red Action and the Sheffield Defence

Campaign along with messages of solidarity from the Irish Republican Socialist Party and John Mitchell, former general secretary of the Irish Distributive and Administrative Trades Union.

Hands Off Ireland!, unlike 'Time To Go', has no intention of shutting up shop for the next ten years. It recognised at its inception the criminal lack of a genuine solidarity movement in Britain over the past two decades and saw the necessity of challenging 'Time To Go' "as the first step towards building a mass solidarity movement based on the organised working class demanding Irish freedom".

The work done towards the contingent (and the contingent itself) has taken us nearer to that goal. We fought in the unions and on the streets for the politics of HOI! and the need for an anti-imperialist contingent.

We concretised this the morning after the 'TTG' demo: HOI! held a conference of supporters to determine the future of the campaign. The overwhelming decision was that HOI! should be continued, in the words of the conference statement, "to build support for and initiate principled solidarity work with the struggle for Irish self determination: to fight for a mass working class based Irish solidarity movement in Britain" around the slogans of "Troops Out Now!" and "Self determination for the Irish nation!"

The conference took a non-sectarian stand on the question of providing platforms for the

representatives of the struggle in Ireland. This is extremely important in the face of attempts by the 'official' solidarity organisations to exclude the IRSP from speaking in Britain. Because of this it was resolved to support the Manchester Martyrs commemoration, which has been attacked for consistently inviting Sinn Fein and the IRSP to its annual commemoration. Attacks on the non sectarian approach of the committee have led to a position where the very existence of the commemoration is threatened; something that HOI! cannot let go unchallenged.

Any solidarity organisation worthy of the name must not only give consistent support to principled initiatives, it must also put forward its own. The Hands Off Ireland! conference therefore decided to initiate an annual Easter demonstration, both to commemorate the 1916 Rising and to link this to building support within the working class in Britain for the present struggle for Irish freedom. Such a march can provide an important focal point for working class mobilisation on Ireland.

Hands Off Ireland! is fighting to lay the basis for the mass movement which will fight alongside the Irish people for a British defeat in Ireland. With this perspective we can ensure that there will be no more 'wasted years'. Fight with Hands Off Ireland! – join the resistance!

- Troops Out Now!
- Self determination for the Irish nation!

Alan Merrick

A critique of the 'British Road to Socialism'

Which road?

Part 2

BOOTH THE Euro Executive Committee of the CPGB and the 're-established' Communist Party of Britain split promised us new versions of their mutual programme, the *British Road to Socialism*. The CPB has duly come up with its backward looking draft but, showing the depth of the ideological crisis afflicting the Euro organisation, its leadership split almost exactly 50:50 on the draft produced by its specially appointed commission. In order to paper over the cracks the Euros have abandoned any attempt to update their programme.

To save themselves they have come up with a "strategy document", the *Manifesto for new times*, based on the ultra-revisionist arguments put forward in their *Facing up to the future*. The relationship between this document and the *BRS* will be "decided" by the Euros' congress in November 1989.

We have already presented our criticisms of *Facing up to the future* (*The Leninist* No77) but before dealing with the CPB's new draft of the *BRS* and the Euros' *Manifesto for new times* it will be instructive if we examine the 1978 edition of the *BRS*, which both wings of 'official communism' still claim as their own (the CPB was formed on the basis of defending it against Euro attempts to revise it — hence it is more than an ironic twist that it was originally drafted by George Matthews and arch Euro Martin Jacques).

Introduction

The introduction to the *BRS* (all references, unless otherwise stated, are from the fifth, 1978 edition) states that it is "based on the theory of scientific socialism first elaborated by Marx and Engels, creatively applying that theory to the situation in Britain and the world" (p3). This claim is absurdly false.

The *BRS*'s scientific socialism is a shabby counterfeit. Its reformist scheme for a "new type of Labour Government" which would solve the capitalist crisis and would even open up "the road to socialism" by "transforming" the state (p4) is not the legitimate offspring of Marx and Engels but Bernstein and Kautsky, the true progenitors of such ideas in the workers' movement.

We shall now go through the *BRS*, step by step, to prove our contention and at the same time present some of our ideas about what should be in a genuine communist programme.

1. Why Britain needs Socialism

Consensus politics — defending parliament

The first section of the *BRS* maintains that "Britain is in deep economic, political and social crisis". All previous editions of the *BRS* since 1950 made the same claim; this or that statistic has been updated, but Britain (and as we shall see, world capitalism) is supposed to be in permanent crisis.

The term crisis is in our view applied far too loosely. Certainly capitalism has run out of all progressive possibilities. As a system it has become moribund and decadent. Yes, Britain has been suffering from relative decline throughout the twentieth century. But as we shall see the *BRS* has no understanding whatsoever of the real laws of motion of the capitalist system. It refers to capitalism developing through a "series of booms and slumps", yet it is unable to historically locate or relate them to our own day.

The fact of the matter is that throughout the 1950s and 60s world capitalism experienced an unprecedented boom (we will deal with this more fully below). This never seems to have sunk into the heads of those who wrote the

BRS. If it has, there is no evidence of it, certainly not in the *BRS*. So, although Britain has been suffering from relative decline in a particularly pronounced form since the end of World War II, because of the boom this was handled without plunging the country into any sort of political crisis.

The assortment of social ills such as NHS charges, property speculation and increased police powers listed in the *BRS* as features of Britain's crisis are actually products of the ending of the boom and the beginning of an intermediate period between boom and slump.

There is, even in this first section of the *BRS*, plenty more muddle. We are told, for example, that since "the end of the Second World War there have been Tory governments for about half the time, and Labour governments for the other half". Remember this was published in 1978, ie before the Thatcher years, so there is nothing amiss here. But then we find the following nonsense: "They have differed in many of their policies, but neither have solved the basic problems." (p5 — our emphasis).

One would have thought it was universally accepted that throughout the long boom of the 1950s and 60s and even during the stagnation of the 70s, the policies of the Labour and Tory parties have been the same in essence. It was because of this that terms such as 'consensus politics' and *Butskellism* — joining together the names of Tory Chancellor RA Butler and Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell — were coined. But what the *BRS* wants us to believe is clear. With different policies Britain's problems could have been overcome.

We have not seen anything yet. The *BRS* says that "local democracy" is being eroded by "the state", as if local government was not part of the state! After saying this it goes on: "The ruling class tries to confine democracy to the right to vote in elections, and deny the people real participation in decision making" and claims that: "Parliament's sovereign rights are being eroded" (p6).

This is typical of the *BRS*. It is not just littered with half truths, it is actually constructed on the basis of them. Of course, the ruling class "tries to confine democracy to the right to vote in elections, and deny the people real participation in decision making". But this is precisely done through the mechanism of the parliamentary system. It gives the minority who own and control the means of production a democratic cloak with which to hide their rule.

Parliament is an institution of the bourgeois state. This is ABC. Whether or not its "rights are being eroded" is open to question, but what is being insinuated is that parliamentary democracy is more than a sham. The facts are straightforward. One house of parliament is not even elected; it consists of the hereditary aristocracy, the top ranks of the Church of England bureaucracy, senile former MPs and trade union leaders who have been rewarded for services rendered. As to the other house, it is little more than a talking shop.

People vote every five years, true. But this does not mean that power resides with the majority. The fact that the capitalist class owns and controls the means of production is worth any number of general elections.

Yet the authors of the *BRS* undoubtedly want us to cherish and defend parliament. Why? Because these opportunists see it as a genuine expression of democracy which can be used as an instrument for social transformation. This is a slippery slope which leads directly to the camp of the bourgeois establishment, and ultimately to counterrevolution ... but let's not run ahead of ourselves.

In this section the reason given as to why we should cherish and defend parliament is merely because its "rights" are under attack by "reactionary forces". In 1977 the most prominent of these "reactionary forces" was said to be the European Community (replacing the USA in previous editions). The EC was

apparently eroding "the right in principle for the British people to determine their own affairs." (p6).

Of course, by slipping in the phrase "in principle" it is implied that through parliament "the British people" can "determine their own affairs": a trick, on the basis of which the *BRS* can paint parliament as a democratic institution.

As some readers might know, on the initiative of the Euros at the 40th Congress of the CPGB it was decided that campaigning against EC membership was no longer a 'priority'. This was merely a pointer to where the Euros wanted to go. A year later, in *Facing up to the future*, the 'left' is attacked for not enthusiastically embracing the EC. Where next?

Clearly a new "menace" to parliamentary democracy will have to be found. Thatcherism has been tried. It has been depicted in semi-fascist colours by just about every Euro. But it did not really stick — Thatcherism was far too British. So given the Euro orientation to what is a Western European imperialist bloc, maybe the US bogey will be brought in again. Who knows? Maybe it will be the revolutionary left. After all, we make no secret about our intention of overthrowing parliament. Yet, whatever rabbit is pulled from the opportunist hat, we can be sure that the charade of parliament will remain at the heart of the Euro project, just as it will for the CPB wing of 'official communism'.

1.1. Contradictions of capitalism

Public sector — transnational companies — imperialism and de-industrialisation

In its own muddled style, the *BRS* correctly locates the source of "Britain's problems" in the contradictions of capitalism, most importantly the contradiction between the social nature of production and the private nature of expropriation. This has been inherited from orthodox Marxism. Nonetheless the *BRS* hints — and it is only that — that somehow the public/nationalised sector of the economy is in some way not capitalist, that it has to be forced to bend to the will of capital. We read that: "There is a constant pressure to subordinate the public sector and make it serve the interests of the private sector." (p6)

We would be the first to say that nationalised industries under capitalism are the easiest to transform into socialist state property after a revolution. Nationalised industries do in a sense represent the seeds of the future inside capitalism. They are in many ways the most socialised areas within the capitalist economy. Undeniably though, they are at the moment the collective property of the capitalist class, owned by the capitalist state.

Workers in these areas of the economy are exploited just like other workers; surplus value is extracted and capitalist relations are reproduced. The surplus value is used either to facilitate accumulation directly in the form of 'ploughing back profits', or distributed indirectly into the coffers of individual capitalists in interest payments, cheap services, lucrative orders or lower prices.

Hence there is no question of "pressure" having to be exerted to force the nationalised sector to serve capitalism's interests.

The *BRS* says that the cause of capitalist crisis is a low level of consumption. It tells us that: "to get the profit, the goods produced have to be sold. And since a major factor in the demand for goods is the level of wages and salaries, restricting them also restricts the market in each capitalist country." (p7).

This theory is okay as far as it goes. But it ignores the crucial role of the law of the tendency for the rate of profit to fall — which Marx

called "in every respect the most important law of modern political economy." (*Grunderisse* p748). Behind the saturation of markets and the general law of capitalist accumulation — the relative pauperisation of the masses — lies the tendency for the rate of profit to fall.

Not recognising this could lead one to the simplistic conclusion that if wages were increased at a stroke, capitalism's crisis would be overcome. This cloud-cuckoo-land scheme has certainly been proposed by reformists and is the main proposition contained in the Alternative Economic Strategy, abandoned as too 'leftist' by the Euros but still dear to the hearts of the CPB.

The AES argues that by increasing wages everyone will be happy: increased wages will increase demand and in turn will increase profits. This is the flip side of capitalists' promises to workers over the ages that if they work harder everyone will benefit: improved productivity will lead to cheaper prices, more demand, secure jobs and eventually higher wages. Of course things don't work out like that. Either way though, on the basis of such utopian confusion, class collaborationism is fostered.

Further confusion is added by the *BRS*'s characterisation of the "multinationals". We are told that they invest and operate "all over the world" and that they owe "allegiance to no one but themselves"; in other words they are unpatriotic. It is their "policies", says the *BRS*, which "have led to a continuous export of capital, with under-investment in British industry and its consequent backwardness as compared to other advanced capitalist countries." (p7)

The term "multinational" is misleading. There are very few genuine multinational companies. The vast majority of major monopolies are *transnational* companies, operating internationally yes, but operating from a specific base, from a specific country. Ford, General Motors, IBM, Chase Manhattan, Standard Oil and Boeing operate internationally, but from their base in the USA. In the same way 'our own' monopolies like British Leyland, ICI, BP, Barclays Bank and British Aerospace have their tentacles spread around the globe, but they remain centred on Britain, they are in a word British. The same applies to the transnational companies of Japan, Federal Germany, France etc.

As to the export of capital and its consequent effects on the structure of the metropolitan economy, this is hardly a new, or a peculiarly British, phenomenon. It is a product of imperialism, a concept referred to in the *BRS* in the case of Britain only in the past tense.

As explained by Lenin in his work *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism*, when capitalism reaches its decadent stage it becomes characterised by monopoly and imperialism, ie the export of capital. This leads to the creation of the 'rentier state', the 'usurer state', in which the bourgeoisie live on the proceeds of capital exports and the 'clipping of coupons'. Because of this, capitalism grows far more rapidly than before; but Lenin pointed out that this growth becomes "more and more uneven" and this "unevenness also manifests itself in particular, in the decay of the countries which are the richest in capital." And Lenin cited Britain as being the prime example of this. (CW, Vol 22 p300)

For Leninists, the decay of Britain's home based industries has nothing to do with lack of patriotism of the transnationals. No, it is simply the result of the playing out of the iron laws of developed (moribund) capitalism, something which can only be overcome by ending capitalism itself.

As to 'our' transnationals having no allegiances except to 'themselves', let us be quite clear as to what is being inferred: it is that they have no loyalty to Britain. This is not the case. To be a British patriot today is to be a partisan of capital. The British state is capital's; capital

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dominates it, capitalists unite to protect it. The British state represents their collective interests against both the working class and the interests of other, foreign, capitalists.

The *BRS* itself declares that: "Monopoly capitalism has become state monopoly capitalism, with the state and the monopolies closely inter-connected." If this contention is broadly correct (and it is), and if the monopolies have "grown in size and increasingly dominate Britain," (p7) (which they do), then passages which portray the transnationals as cosmopolitan, divorced from nation and therefore state, must be seen as deliberate attempts to mislead.

1.2. How capitalist rule is maintained

Rule by consent and coercion – democracy – violence

This subsection of the *BRS* is pivotal for the entire document. The whole elaborate strategy of reforming British capitalism into socialism rests on its contention that capital maintains its rule by consent and that once that consent is withdrawn the capitalist state machine can be transformed through an election and used as the vehicle for socialism.

The subsection begins correctly enough with the observation that: "The concentration of wealth and economic control in fewer and fewer hands means that a small number of big firms exercise enormous power. Their decisions have a major influence on Britain's economy, on the extent of investment, the amount and type of goods produced, the prices charged, the balance of payments, and the position of the pound. Yet those who own and run them are not elected by, or responsible to, the people. It is a system which makes a mockery of democracy." (p8)

In other words, under capitalism there is, and can only be, the appearance of democracy. Formal democracy, that is, where the majority of wage slaves can choose who will misrepresent them, but where, behind the cloak of democracy, a minority rules through control of the state and the ownership of the means of production.

Unfortunately the *British Road* then contradicts this orthodox communist understanding of bourgeois democracy. It says the ruling class exercises "a degree of coercion to maintain its rule" using institutions like "the civil service, the police, the armed forces, the judiciary, the Foreign Office etc." (our emphasis p9). The word "degree" is no slip, it is a clever, all things to all people, device, allowing opportunism to worm its way through the description of the formal nature of bourgeois democracy. After all, we can have a small degree of force or a large degree of force. Anyway, having sown some seeds of doubt, the *BRS* then bluntly states that capitalist rule "relies primarily on the fact that millions of people believe that the present political system is truly democratic." (p9 – our emphasis)

We do not deny that, because of habit, the media and the domination of bourgeois ideas in society, millions believe in the sham of parliamentary democracy. But to suggest that bourgeois rule rests primarily on consent is utter nonsense. It does, though, allow the authors of the *BRS* to reduce political struggle to primarily a battle of ideas. This is a blatantly anti-Marxist position. For us, matter (in this instance the state and class society) is primary, ideas (consciousness) secondary. We do not deny the importance of winning the battle of ideas but we understand that winning the battle of ideas means winning the masses to make violent revolution against the state, a very material act.

Lenin time and time again insisted that behind the facade of parliamentary and judicial nicety is concealed the mailed fist of counterrevolutionary terror. This had to be taken on and destroyed. The struggle to extend democratic rights can be used to expose it, but in the last analysis force will decide. Some claim this view was based purely on experience of Tsarist Russia, which was backward and traditionally autocratic. We need to look to Gramsci and the like in order to understand the capitalist state in the west, they say. This is to gut Gramsci – for all his idealist tendencies – of his revolutionism, and treat Lenin as a simpleton.

Lenin was, of course, fully aware of the situation in Western Europe. He did, after all

spend lengthy periods in exile there. But Lenin's analysis of the capitalist state did not rely on mere personal experience, let alone the superficial banalities which pepper the *BRS*. No, his understanding was based on a truly scientific grasp of the essence of bourgeois rule, not only in backward countries but in the most advanced democratic ones.

Let us see whether Lenin suffered from an eastern bias. Writing against the former 'Pope of Marxism', in his *The proletarian revolution and the renegade Kautsky*, Lenin insisted that: "The more highly developed a democracy is, the more imminent are pogroms or civil war in connection with every profound political divergence which is dangerous to the bourgeoisie. The learned Mr Kautsky could have studied this 'law' of bourgeois democracy in connection with the Dreyfus case in republican France, with the lynching of negroes and internationalists in the democratic republic of America, with the case of Ireland and Ulster in democratic Britain, with the baiting of the Bolsheviks and the staging of pogroms against them in April 1917 in the democratic republic of Russia ..."

"Take the bourgeois parliament. Can it be that the learned Kautsky has never heard that the more highly democracy is developed, the more the bourgeois parliaments are subjected by the stock exchange and the bankers? This does not mean that we must not make use of bourgeois parliaments (the Bolsheviks made far better use of it than probably any other party in the world, for in 1912-14 we won the entire workers' curia in the fourth Duma). But it does mean that only a liberal can forget the historical limitations and conventional nature of the bourgeois parliamentary system as Kautsky does. Even in the most democratic bourgeois state the oppressed people at every step encounter the trying contradictions between formal equality proclaimed by the 'democracy' of the capitalists and the thousands of real limitations and subterfuges which turn the proletarians into wage slaves. It is precisely this contradiction that is opening the eyes of the people to the rottenness, mendacity and hypocrisy of capitalism. It is this contradiction that the agitators and propagandists of socialism are constantly exposing to the people, in order to prepare them for revolution! And now that the era of revolution has begun, Kautsky turns his back upon it and begins to extol the charms of moribund bourgeois democracy." (CW Vol 28 pp245-6, original emphasis).

We make no excuse for quoting Lenin at length. In our view what he says about bourgeois democracy is as true today as it was when he penned the above words in 1918. Our view of bourgeois democracy is based firmly on the lessons of life itself. Unlike the authors of the *BRS* we do not impose some preconceived schema on reality. Just as in 1918, bourgeois democracy is, and can only be, formal democracy. The instant the masses attempt to go beyond bourgeois society the ruling class resorts to force to maintain the status quo.

Today, in under developed and medium developed capitalist countries, democracy is a luxury for the ruling class. In these countries the bourgeoisie and its state is weak. Therefore it is often forced to rule without the cloak of democracy. In the advanced capitalist countries the reverse is true. As a result it takes quite profound movements of the masses to disturb the political order. But in the event of such disturbances the powerful bourgeois state is brought to the fore, used to crush and terrorise. It is for this reason Lenin said the descent into pogrom and civil war was 'especially' a feature of the 'most' democratic bourgeois regimes. He was right.

We need only recall what Wiemar Germany produced. As for today, to get a glimpse of what lies behind bourgeois democracy, look at Britain, which is still relatively speaking a stable bourgeois democracy. The miners learnt more about bourgeois democracy than the authors of the *BRS* will ever know during their Great Strike of 1984-5. In those heady days the coercive reality of bourgeois rule stood revealed. Miners had to face unprecedented police terror merely in order to maintain their strike and exercise the right to picket. Ten thousand were arrested, many hundreds injured and two died in what was obviously more, far more, than a run of the mill industrial dispute, though not a revolution or anything like it.

As to the nationalist population in Ireland's occupied Six Counties, they, more than any other section of the population in the United Kingdom, know the reality behind British

democracy. The demand for civil rights in the Six Counties in the late 1960s was met first with police baton and then pogrom. In that part of the UK there are no-jury courts, internal exile is routinely imposed, over 2,000 have died and the state effectively encourages and on occasion directs UVF and UDA fascist assassination gangs.

All this in a civilised, still stable, western country. Is Lenin's analysis outdated? Hardly. Once consent is withdrawn the ruling class has to and does maintain its domination through coercion. This, not the illusion people have in parliamentary democracy, is the material essence of the capitalist state.

Although the *BRS* grudgingly admits that the capitalists are "prepared to use coercion and violence", it places all its hopes in "preventing" this by the use of "overwhelming working class and popular strength" (p10). What exactly is meant by "preventing" we will see later on. In the meantime let us again emphasise that for the *BRS* the capitalists rule "mainly" through "achieving a social consensus and class collaboration" (p10). It is only through such a one sided analysis that the *BRS* can propose to change Britain simply by winning a parliamentary majority.

We do, as we have said, see the need to win the mass of the population. Not as atomised passive voters or walk on walk off extraparliamentary extras. For us the masses must be won to take a collective, active and creative role in the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeois state – and that includes the overthrow of parliament – and in building the new socialist state. Our task is not to defend bourgeois democracy and its parliament before the masses. On the contrary, our task is to expose through political struggle the fact that bourgeois rule is based on the ownership and control of the means of production, and maintained in the last analysis through terror and force.

1.3. World balance changed

There are three major questions with which we profoundly disagree in this subsection. We will deal with them one by one under separate headings.

1.3.1. General crisis

It is here that we find the most extensive references to "the world crisis of capitalism" and "its period of general crisis". The *BRS* equates this with capitalism's "period of relative decline and decay". We consider the *BRS* wrong here on a number of counts.

The *BRS* locates the beginning of capitalism's 'general crisis' and its 'decay' with the October Revolution in 1917. Yet undeniably capitalism experienced general crises since its very inception. We would also add that it was not in 1917 that capitalism began to decay, ie became a relative fetter on the development of the productive forces. Capitalism became reactionary when it reached the stage of monopoly and imperialism roughly in between the years 1870 and 1880. The October Revolution marked the beginning of the world socialist revolution, not the first sign of capitalism's decadence.

But let us deal more fully with general crises of capitalism and what they are and aren't.

In essence Marx described three distinct phases in capitalism's cycle. The first was the phase of the boom, when profit rates are going up and up. Competition between capitalists is over an expanding market. But, as we all know, in the race to increase the mass of profits living labour is replaced by machines. This is the Achilles heel of capitalism because it causes the rate of profit to decline. Living labour is – as all Marxist economists will tell you, those who remain Marxists at least – the source of all surplus value and hence profit (realised surplus value).

Eventually, therefore, as machinery takes the place of living labour the rate of profit declines, the boom peters out and capitalism enters a period of relative stagnation characterised by a massive expansion of the credit system and speculative profit making.

Life for the individual capitalist increasingly becomes like the labour of Sisyphus. More and more machinery must be purchased simply to stay still. Capitalism's inner contradiction becomes compounded. Capital becomes relatively overaccumulated and ever greater amounts of fictitious capital are needed simply

to keep things going. In time the point is reached where the credit system becomes so bloated and stretched that the slightest loss of confidence causes the whole edifice to come crashing down like a pack of cards.

When Marx used the term general crisis he gave it a precise scientific meaning. It was when the mass of profit can no longer be expanded, when there was the absolute overproduction of capital, the collapse of the credit system and an enforced destruction of capital.

In its infancy capitalism went through this cycle of boom-stagnation-general crisis every five years. From 1847 onwards, however, Marx noted that the cycle became extended to ten years because of the growth of the credit system. After thirty years or so in its turn the decennial pattern itself broke down. Engels focussed his attention on this in an extensive footnote in Volume III of Marx's *Capital* first published in 1894. Showing the depth of his vision, he wrote about the possibility of the "chronic, long drawn out alternation between a slight business improvement and a relatively long indecisive depression", ie the period of stagnation which spanned the 1880s and 90s, being "the preparatory stage of a new world crash of unparalleled vehemence".

The *BRS*'s idea of a permanent general crisis since 1917, the date when capitalism's 'world domination' was 'shattered', is not based on Marx's theory of the capitalist cycle. If we are to use the term general crisis, we think it correct to do so in the way the founder of scientific communism did. Certainly, as predicted by Engels, capitalism plunged into its deepest and most protracted general crisis. It began in 1914, reached its nadir in 1929 and lasted till the end of the 1940s. Only with the end of World War II and the triumph of the USA were the conditions created for a new boom ... and what a boom it was.

Capitalism expanded around the world at an unprecedented rate, for an unprecedented length of time. However, some could not see what was in front of their noses. Dogmatic insistence on "world capitalism's crisis" and "general crisis" blinded 'official communism' to the reality of the long boom. Failure to grasp the fact that the 1950s and 60s were qualitatively different from the 1920s and 30s inevitably produced a rich harvest of confusion in the ranks of 'official communism'.

There are those who have retreated to one AES version of Keynesianism or another, many it seemed despaired of all serious thought altogether, while some who still like to pretend that the long boom somehow did not happen put forward the myopic view that capitalism still goes through a five year cycle and that the fleeting upturns in the midst of the general gloom are 'booms'. A goulash of these various ideas can be found in the *BRS*. Frankly, this sort of analysis is not worthy of bourgeois apologetics, let alone the Marxist method.

Capitalism's cycle has been greatly drawn out quantitatively and qualitatively. Where it was once contained within a five year period, capitalism's cycle now stretches over forty, fifty or sixty years. And to this cycle, the development of imperialism has added war. This has been the history of capitalism in the twentieth century.

The relative overproduction of capital and the bloated credit system which has characterised capitalism over the last two decades are the classic symptoms of the transitional phase between boom and general crisis. And unless we put a stop to it by making revolution, what lies in front of us is a new general crisis which will certainly dwarf the last one, which included the cataclysmic 1929 crash and two world wars.

As Engels pointed out, the extent and height of a boom determines the extent and depth of a slump. That is why it is vital to fully face up to and understand the long boom. Those, like the authors of the *BRS*, who ignore it are hardly in any sort of position to equip the working class for the tasks of the future.

1.3.2. World balance

Linked to the idea that capitalism is in permanent general crisis and is quietly withering on the vine is the contention that there has been "a decisive tilt in the balance of world forces" between capitalism and socialism.

It was in the statement issued by the meeting of representatives of communist and

workers' parties held in Moscow in November 1960 and at the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1961 (where its Third Programme was adopted) that this claim and its opportunist ramifications were first announced.

According to 'official communism', the 'general crisis of capitalism' had moved, circa 1961, from its 'second to third stage', from the stage where, after World War II, socialism became a world system, to where the "balance of forces is changing more and more in favour of socialism", so much so that it comes to be the "deciding factor" in the world's development (see E Varga, *Twentieth century capitalism*).

This was a convenient 'discovery'. It has been used as the justification by 'official communism' to claim that the character of the epoch has changed from one of wars and revolutions to one where socialism and peace are dominant. And this, the *BRS* maintains, means that the British "advance to socialism" would not be subject to "foreign military intervention". Hence, because of Britain's traditions (we will deal with them later), socialism will, or so says the *BRS*, come peacefully and through parliament, ie a reformist road to socialism.

Earlier versions of the *BRS* had already justified the reformist road with reference to the growing number of socialist countries. But it was the discovery of a so-called *decisive shift* that the opportunists needed to conjure up.

As soon as it was 'discovered' it was eagerly incorporated into the *BRS*; it served admirably to shore up and vindicate it against its critics. Combined with a reformist concept of the state, the claim that the world balance of forces had tilted constituted a vital extra support through which the *BRS* could be given theoretical credence.

The *BRS* claims that the tilt "in the direction of socialism and progress" is the "main feature of the world today." (p12) It also wants us to believe that it is only a matter of time before the existing socialist countries overtake capitalism. The *BRS* says that in the "post-war period the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries have achieved consistent economic growth increases and maintained full employment and stable prices, in contrast to the crisis-ridden economies of the US and capitalist Western Europe, showing that capitalism will eventually be outpaced by socialism." (our emphasis p11).

As we have indicated, we do not think that a *decisive tilt* in the world balance of forces has taken place or will take place if we rely on the present socialist countries alone. Let us present our case.

The *BRS* does not actually define what it means by the world balance of forces between capitalism and socialism. But it is a safe bet to say that for the *BRS* it is decided by the relative strength of the socialist countries. We would add to this the strength of the working class in the capitalist countries. Although these are related we can deal with them separately (we will also touch upon the national liberation movements upon which so much faith is placed).

The strength of the socialist countries is not simply evaluated. But we can begin by looking at what socialist states there are and what relationships exist between them.

The mainstay of the socialist world is obviously the Soviet Union — the country where the working class movement has reached its highest, ie the world's revolutionary centre. Around it what Brezhnev called the socialist community is militarily and economically integrated through the Warsaw Pact and Comecon. Countries like People's China, Albania and Yugoslavia are socialist but not aligned to the Soviet Union (while a number of states such as Syria are capitalist but have alliances with the Soviet Union).

What about the other side of the balance, the imperialist world? Where the number of socialist states does not exceed fifteen, it is led by a pack of very powerful nations: the USA, Japan, Britain, Federal Germany, Italy, France and Canada. Besides the 'big seven' there are around fifteen other countries, such as Denmark, Switzerland and Australia, which make up the core of the capitalist world system. So what is the balance between what have been called the First and Second Worlds?

In population terms a third of the world lives under socialism, most of them in China. If we take away China's 1.1 billion inhabitants the figure goes down to only about 10%. But, as any O level student would tell us, the key statistic on which we must judge the sets of

countries is not population. It is total productive capacity and above all the productivity of labour.

In 1961 in its Third Program the CPSU said that: "the world socialist system is advancing towards decisive victory in its economic competition with capitalism" and that it will "shortly surpass the world capitalist system" (1970 was named as the date). Life has proved otherwise.

The Soviet Union may be considered a superpower but in labour productivity it ranks with Eire and Puerto Rico, and comes only 39th in the world. China, Democratic Korea and Vietnam come far behind it and must be considered backward. Even the German Democratic Republic, the most advanced socialist country in this respect, with the highest productivity rates and living standards, lags significantly behind advanced capitalism. Indeed, so much so that it is economically attractive for thousands upon thousands of its citizens to illegally cross to the Federal Republic, risking imprisonment and even death to do so.

Now Gorbachev has been forced to admit that the Soviet Union has been suffering from relative decline over the last twenty years. Evidence of this can be seen in the very concrete form of Japan. From being a second rate imperialist power in the 1950s it now has a GNP which has either overtaken the Soviet Union or is within a hair's breadth of doing so.

The Soviet Union may boast about its world lead in the production of oil, cement, pig iron and diesel locomotives. These figures, however, are the economic indices of the 1950s, not the 1980s. Putting them on an unjustified pedestal masked the relative *decline* of the all the socialist countries. The facts are all too clear.

As a percentage of world gross product and above all in terms of quality it is widely recognised that their economies are technologically backward, inefficient and wasteful, and, in relative terms, increasingly so.

Take the energy necessary to produce what is called one unit of GNP. The GDR — the most efficient economy in Comecon — only just equals the efficiency of Portugal. This country is the most backward member of the European Community and is far behind Federal Germany — its most advanced.

All in all, we can say that the imperialist economies have retained their historical advantage over the socialist economies (which emerged in the main on the foundations of backward capitalism); and almost certainly during the 1970s and 80s the gap has stopped narrowing and has instead widened. The imperialist powers and capitalism remain the determining force in the world economy. Their metabolism determines the 'vagaries' of the world market, not least because they exploit most of the world through unequal relations of trade, the export of capital and the extraction of massive superprofits.

So, taken as a whole, the socialist countries can in no way be said to have "tilted" the world balance of forces if judged in terms of labour productivity. In this respect capitalism remains overwhelmingly the stronger social system.

What about total production? Until a few years ago 'official communism' claimed that the socialist countries were rapidly growing and accounted for 43% of the world's industrial production and that Comecon alone accounted for 33%. We always questioned this.

Western sources give Comecon a gross product (and that includes Cuba and Vietnam) totalling some \$2,020 billion. The economic balance *against* socialism can be seen if we set this against the top seven imperialist nations' \$8,193 billion. Unfortunately these figures are more rather than less accurate, certainly compared with those that used to be triumphantly announced in Novosti publications. The United Nations — a body much admired by 'official communism' — comes up with similar statistics. It says the 'centrally planned economies' account for around 20% of the world's gross product.

Although there are obviously problems with the non-convertability of the currencies of the socialist countries, this should in no way blind us to the truth. Non-convertability means the UN figures are, if anything, puffed up, some say by as much as 25% to 30%. The world is far too dangerous a place to pretend otherwise. Marx said the task of communists was not merely to interpret the world but to change it. But if we use wishful thinking instead of hard fact we will never achieve

anything. Cooking the books has nothing to do with changing the world. It is a retreat from the struggle to do so.

The rosy picture painted by the 'official optimists' of 'official communism' is even more illusory than it might first appear. We must take into account the political as well as the economic. After all, we all know the socialist countries cannot be 'taken as a whole'.

Under the leadership of Stalin the socialist world worked in unity. But this was a bureaucratic unity and bound to break down. Since the late 1940s we have seen one conflict after another break out between the socialist countries. There have even been armed actions between them, and with the advent of Gorbachevism the process of disintegration is speeding up.

Trade barriers are being enforced between Czechoslovakia and Poland, Romania is attacked by Hungary, the GDR bans official Soviet publications, the ruling parties have shown themselves completely alienated from the masses — as elections in Poland and the bloodshed in China proves — and as a result nationalist and openly counterrevolutionary groupings are mushrooming all around. Monolithic unity remains an aim for the future.

This brings us to our last point concerning the strength of the socialist countries. Living socialism does not represent a final victory. The struggle against capitalism continues *within it* and must be taken into account when assessing the world balance of forces.

Socialism is not a definite mode of production but a *transitional* form of society standing in between capitalism and communism. As such it contains within it elements of both, not least the carry-overs from capitalism in the form of commodity production and the law of value as well as the new emerging communist law of planning. The struggle against the former is bound up with the struggle for socialist democracy under socialism, the struggle for the working class to rule directly instead of through a bureaucracy.

This general struggle has an added twist to it because in all the countries of living socialism the working class does not exercise hegemony over the bureaucracy. The supposed servant of society is in reality the master. And as can be seen from the declining growth rates in most of the socialist countries, the stagnation in the Soviet Union and the turn to market socialism, the bureaucracy is no longer able to play any progressive role whatsoever. It has become an absolute fetter on the development of the productive forces.

No longer attempting to maintain the status quo, the Gorbachevites (and their equivalents in China, Poland, Hungary etc) are seeking to strengthen the forces of capitalism, in the form of commodity production, the law of value and the market. This will have a very profound political impact. It poses the question 'who rules?' Either there will be an internal counterrevolution, not so much from below but from above, or the proletariat will make a political revolution and transform the bureaucracy from master into servant of society.

All in all at this moment in time it cannot be said that the existing socialist countries have within themselves 'decisively tilted' the balance of forces against capitalism. In fact the balance is tilting towards the internal forces of counterrevolution.

The *BRS*'s claim that the existing (backward) socialist countries could out compete (advanced) capitalism originated with JV Stalin. He claimed in the mid 1930s that the USSR could by its own efforts and in isolation from the rest of the world arrive at communism, ie abundance. This was either the result of ignorance of Marxism or a deliberate distortion if it.

Communists in Britain have never been known for their ability to think for themselves. So it is hardly surprising that in its own ham fisted way the *BRS* puts forward exactly the same proposition for Britain.

At the very least this betrays a lack of theoretical understanding of what communism is — the fact that it is stateless and classless, and can only operate on a planet wide basis. It also encourages the belief that revolutions in other countries — above all in the imperialist heartlands of Western Europe, North America and Japan — are not vitally necessary if our own or any socialist revolution is to be guaranteed.

Only with the world dictatorship of the proletariat — the World Union of Socialist Republics — and the beginning of the epoch of

communism can the victories which the socialist countries represent for the world's proletariat be made permanent, irreversible and complete. This fundamental truth is completely absent from the *BRS*.

So what about the strength of the working class in the capitalist countries and the forces for national liberation?

There is no doubt that the march of history is towards communism. Capitalism is moribund and visibly heading for a devastating new general crisis. Only socialism offers the world's population peace and progress. The proletarians of the world, who now have to be counted in the hundreds, not tens, of millions, are comparatively sophisticated in terms of education and technical knowledge. On a world scale the size of our class has never been greater and tens of millions of advanced workers are to be found in the ranks of communist parties.

Objectively, therefore, our class is strong. This, however, is not the end of the story. Class strength is measured not only quantitatively but qualitatively. The Russian working class in 1917 was small in number but, because of revolutionary determination, experience and Bolshevik leadership, was able to seize power and put itself in the vanguard of the country and the world revolution.

In other words the strength of the working class is also a product of its class combativity and communist consciousness. How do things stand in this respect today?

The world communist movement has moved far to the right and is in the process of disintegration. Where the collapse of the Second International took place suddenly, the world communist movement has suffered a similar fate only spread over many decades. Ideological unity ended long before the end of organisational unity (the disbanding of the Third International in 1943). Yet it is only today that we have reached the point where its component parties are beginning to collapse into either organisational liquidation or social democracy.

While our class is hundreds of millions strong, it has no democratic centralist international party. Although the classic writings of communism have been translated into almost every written language, the bulk of class conscious workers find themselves in the ranks of the parties of 'official communism' or social democracy. And despite iconising Marx, Engels and Lenin, 'official communism' has, like social democracy, become anti-internationalist. It has national centred programmes which, like the *BRS*, reek of chauvinism. And, like the social democrats, the parties of 'official communism' have constituted themselves as left advisors to their own bourgeoisies, demanding the protection of 'our' industry and immigration controls. As history proves, this is only one step away from supporting imperialist war.

For genuine communists this is hardly a cause for celebration. But neither is it cause for despair. As indicated above there are significant and important parallels between what is happening in the workers' movement today and what happened to the Second International in 1914, only now what is on the agenda is not beginning the world revolution but completing it.

In the USSR the conditions for a political revolution are rapidly maturing. Success in this would dramatically alter the world balance of forces and provide a powerful inspiration for workers everywhere to take the road to communism. Of course a precondition of this is ideological victory over opportunism.

The working class must be won to the new Bolshevism, the Leninism of reformed communist parties, if it is to act as a class for itself and carry out its self liberation. So it can never be emphasised too strongly that ideological struggle against opportunism is no luxury, it is an integral component part of the struggle against capitalism and the bourgeoisie. This is why we are writing this polemic. After all, anyone who has ever read the *BRS* knows we are not doing it for fun.

Anyway, let us now deal with the national liberation movements. It must be admitted that even those led by the most determined revolutionaries know that, in spite of securing formal political independence, imperialism can still crack the economic whip. The situation in Mozambique, Vietnam and Nicaragua tragically illustrates this. The fact of the matter is that only with further revolutions, not least in the advanced capitalist countries, can the backward parts of the world rapidly advance and become truly free.

It must be admitted though, that for all the

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socialistic slogans, most liberation movements are merely aiming to establish an independent capitalist country, where the native as opposed to the foreign bourgeois can exploit the working class and the country's people. And while we support these movements against imperialism, it is not in our interests to paint them red – to imagine, as the BRS seems to do, that victories for national liberation are equivalent to victories for socialism.

1.3.3. A peaceful road?

Due to the supposed new balance of world forces the leaders of many communist parties claimed world war was preventable simply through supporting pacifistic movements. War was no longer the continuation of politics, rather an act of irrationality. The struggle against war was thus divorced from the struggle for world revolution. Moreover, as imperialism was supposed to be no longer the power it had been, its ability to intervene and drown popular upsurges in blood no longer existed and thus the parliamentary road to socialism, as advocated by the BRS was not only a perfectly legitimate strategy, it became the only strategy.

We have always been opposed to this neo-social democracy. For very good reasons too. Those who really fight for communism have no interest in kidding themselves. As we have shown, I think conclusively, the world balance has not tilted decisively in favour of socialism. The socialist countries have not caught up, let alone overtaken, imperialism. Indeed the rise of Gorbachevism shows the gains of socialism are in grave danger from within.

We are confident that through new revolutions (political and social) a new chapter in the history of socialism is about to begin. But what of the Euro and the CPBers? Looking at the overwhelming evidence that capitalism remains the dominant force on the planet, and the fact that the socialist countries are a bastion threatened from without and endangered from within, will they abandon their idea that socialism can be won in Britain peacefully, without civil war, etc? Will they admit their wrong assessment and vow to prepare for violent revolution?

That would be the only intellectually honest thing to do. But opportunism is nothing if it is not intellectually dishonest. The opportunists will find new excuses for their opportunism. That, after all, was all the claim that there had been a "decisive tilt" in the world balance of forces and that the existing socialist countries were "outpacing" capitalism was all about in the first place.

By exaggerating achievements, centrist leaders in the socialist countries could bask in success, even when they were not real. With exaggerated figures, everything in the garden could be painted rosy. Communism became divorced from struggle. It became a mechanical process which would proceed smoothly as long as the status quo was not disturbed. Life has shown this not to be the case. Communism necessitates the continued class struggle of the working class under socialism and the making of revolutions throughout the capitalist world, not least in the imperialist countries. Lenin was right all along.

The revolution will need to be armed, prepared to do violence. The chances of successful counterrevolution are reduced, and the ability of external reactionary intervention is lessened, given the power of the socialist states, not least in terms of their united encouragement of world revolution. But the use of violence, its intensity, is determined by the extent of opposition offered by the capitalists. A peaceful road to socialism is possible in the future. But – and it's a big but – this would be due to the potential of the working class to inflict massive, irresistible and overwhelming punishment in the event of capitalist resistance. Unfortunately this is not the case today.

Some will argue that as capitalism goes into crisis existing socialism will overtake it by default, so to speak. This is again in part wishful thinking, in part downright dangerous.

Socialism does not exist outside the world economy. It is a product of its contradictions. There might be two social systems in the world but there is only one world market. As its dominant part goes towards crisis all parts will be affected. Moreover as capitalism plunges into crisis we will not see a universal collapse but a growing unevenness between rival economies and within national economies. In other words there will be islands of

rapid advance amidst a sea of decline.

This was the case in the 1920s and 30s when, against the general backdrop of decline, the 'sunshine' industries around motor cars, electrical goods and airplanes boomed in uncertain terms. And, as we know, with the massive advances in computers, biotechnology, superconductivity, lasers and the exploitation of space it is certainly the case today and, above all, will be tomorrow.

As we mentioned above, another feature of capitalist general crisis under imperialism is the drive towards war. The fact that the imperialist nations possess far greater GNPs and a growing lead technologically is therefore of particular cause for concern. Not least when the leaders of the socialist states are seeking to appease imperialism with pacifistic speeches and treacherous acts of unilateral disarmament.

Imperialism in crisis dramatically accelerates the power of the means of destruction, it turns mankind's inventiveness to the most obscene use.

In World War I Britain's fledgling car industry gave birth to the tank, the brilliant German chemists who had produced all sorts of new dyes and cleaning agents made possible the horrors of gas warfare. Just over two decades later Hitler ensured German technical genius produced the jet engine, the extermination camp and the V2. Roosevelt and Churchill got their scientists to go one better with the A Bomb.

Are things any different now? No! The USA's record levels of 'defence' spending and its resulting SDI, the new range of smart weapons, the Stealth aircraft and first strike ballistic missile systems bear witness to the speed with which the pre-general crisis of capitalism is fuelling the development of the means of destruction. A full blown general crisis will lead to an exponential development in the drive towards war.

We will not cop out and trust in the new revisionism of Gorbachev. The *only way forward* is to carry out our duty to the working class, our proletarian internationalist duty, and fight for revolution. Living socialism can at best only restrain the imperialist war drive. It cannot prevent it. Peace can only come through the working class completing the world revolution. In the meantime we must undeviatingly build the Party of revolution and support this struggle in every other country without exception.

1.4. Britain's crisis

Imperialism, a policy or the last stage of capitalism?

This subsection is titled 'Britain's crisis'. What the BRS actually deals with here is Britain's decline. It does touch upon the little matter of Ireland in passing, but this is something we will deal with specifically, later on. One point, though, we do wish to single out from the mish mash of "balance of payments crises", the "growth" of the National Front, the rise in inflation (ie what struck the BRS's authors as important in 1977) is the concept of imperialism. It is projected as being the mistaken policy which has exacerbated 'Britain's crisis'. This is what passes for 'Marxist-Leninist' theory in the BRS.

We are told that following World War II there was a "need for a complete break with past imperialist policies". But instead, "successive governments, whether Tory or Labour, have continued with such policies" (p13 – our emphasis). The implication is clear. A Labour government – or even a Tory government – could, if the will was there, "break" with imperialism, after all it is only a "policy".

Such a course would be possible if imperialism was nothing more than that. If that was the case, then yes, this or that government could discard imperialism like a pair of smelly old socks. But imperialism is not simply a policy.

The most precise definition of imperialism was supplied to us by VI Lenin. He said the essence of imperialism is monopoly capitalism. It is the replacement of competitive, industrial capitalism by monopoly, through the massive concentration of the ownership of the means of production into fewer and fewer hands and the growing together of industrial capital and banking capital to form finance capital. In other words it is a stage – the highest – in capitalism's evolution.

No matter what privatisations, commissions

and regulations various governments have concocted in the name of promoting competition, the last two decades have seen monopolisation reach heights hardly imaginable a century ago. As to the growing together of industrial monopolies with banking monopolies, their merger was long ago completed, a fact we can illustrate with British Leyland.

This enterprise not only has bankers on the board but has earned far more in recent years moving money around the world than it has in producing cars. In this it is far from unique and only goes to show how correct was Lenin's insistence that under imperialism the export of capital assumes greater importance than the export of commodities. Only to the philistine is British Leyland an example of industrial capitalism, in fact it is a classic example of the merger of industrial and banking capital, ie finance capital.

Because imperialism is parasitic and lives by the export of capital, it inevitably engenders a tendency towards stagnation and decay in the metropolitan country. More and more capital is controlled from the City of London but the origin of surplus value is more and more from outside the frontiers of Britain. Indeed, as we have seen during the Thatcherite years, the stratum of capitalists who play no part in production, whose profits depend solely on 'clipping coupons', has expanded enormously with the massive upsurge in the export of capital, so-called 'overseas investments'. This, as Lenin said, would go hand in hand with industrial stagnation in the metropolitan countries, so it is worth noting that in spite of all the Thatcherite hype, today in Britain investment in industrial production is still below 1979 levels.

It is because of monopolisation and the export of capital (imperialism) that Lenin arrived at the conclusion that capitalism had become moribund. Once it arrives at the stage of monopoly, capitalist relations of production come to hold back the development of the forces of production from what would be possible if they were organised along socialist lines (in order to reflect the social nature of production). In other words, imperialism is a relative fetter on the productive forces.

Imperialism also comes to represent an absolute danger to what has been achieved by thousands of years of human labour. As is well known, along with the increasingly uneven growth of different great powers and the drive to export capital, imperialism brings war. Uneven development leads to wars of world redivision. The two world wars we have seen in this century cost 75 million lives and forced down the 'natural' growth of the world economy. The monstrous – and historically unprecedented in peacetime – level of spending on arms since 1945 has a similar effect. But undoubtedly a third imperialist world war would have an absolute effect: it would throw the world back into a new dark age.

Clearly, if we understand imperialism as monopoly (whether in the form of Marks and Spencer, British Telecom or Barclays Bank), there can be no talk of it being discarded by this or that government. Those, like the authors of the BRS, who call for a non-imperialist capitalism are in effect calling for capitalism to return to the womb, for the monopolies to de-evolve into hundreds and thousands of small competing concerns, employing tens not tens of thousands of workers.

This is like *disinventing* the wheel, ie it is nonsense. Imperialism can only be 'discarded' by going forward with a social revolution, which will transfer ownership of Marks and Spencer, British Telecom and Barclays Bank etc, to the workers' state in Britain, merge them with their former monopolistic rivals Next, Mercury and National Westminster, etc and then as quickly as possible hand them over to the workers' world government.

Why do the authors of the BRS insist on being so daft? It is hardly ignorance. They have ready access to the works of Lenin. The Euro organisation, after all, receives tens of thousands of pounds in hidden subsidy from Moscow every year from their sale. So why do they refuse to define imperialism as a definite stage in the development of capitalism?

The answer is, in a word, material interest. The BRS as a programme reflects the interests of the labour bureaucracy in Britain; it has an interest in the reform of capitalism – channelling capital into British industry, for example – but it fears any challenge to the system itself.

Marx made the point that the ancient proletariat of Rome lived at the expense of society and that conversely capitalist society lived at the expense of the modern prolet-

ariat. This remains true, but it has to be admitted that imperialism has complicated the picture somewhat. A privileged, upper section of the working class has been brought into existence and lives partially at the expense of the exploitation by imperialism of the proletariat in the oppressed and neo-colonial countries.

Through the enormous superprofits capitalists can gain from abroad over and above those which they squeeze out of their 'own' workers it is possible to bribe, through countless direct, indirect, overt and covert methods, the leaders of the labour movement and their hangers on. Hence superprofits obtained through imperialism are the material basis for the growth of opportunism.

A 'bourgeoisified' section of the working class develops thanks to the crumbs from the imperialists' table. It enjoys what is essentially a petty bourgeois life style, indeed to a degree it merges with the petty bourgeoisie. Politically this enables capital to put the labour bureaucracy on the payroll and turn it into an agent of the bosses within the working class movement.

From its origins the leadership of our CPGB was made up of those whose conception of communist practice did not go much beyond left centrism. In spite of our profound respect for Arthur McManus, Albert Inkpin, Tom Bell, Shapurji Saklatvala and other founding comrades, this has to be admitted. Unfortunately this was never rectified. There was consequently a failure to really steel the Party ideologically. Hence it was vulnerable to infection from bourgeois ideas, not least once the leadership of the Soviet Union itself began to retreat from the principles of scientific socialism under JV Stalin.

Some will consider what we have just said to be a slight against those who devoted their lives to the struggle for socialism. Nothing could be further from the truth. The growth of bourgeois ideas is not the result of agents or a lack of militants with guts. At the risk of oversimplification bourgeois, ie opportunist, ideas come into the communist movement through, so to speak, the very air we breath, they are a spontaneous product of commodity production (of which capitalism is the highest but not the only example).

Only with constant and unyielding ideological struggle can the ever present ideas of the capitalist class and its dominant culture be combated. We all know this did not happen in the CPGB. In the absence of an unyielding struggle for a scientific, revolutionary world outlook, the inevitable 'bourgeoisification' saw the CPGB end up with a programme which wants to defend Britain's parliament.

1.5. Strategy for socialism

In spite of its title this subsection does not present any sort of a strategy for socialism, only yet another rehash of arguments which excuse developing a real strategy for socialism.

We are correctly told that it is necessary to go beyond the defensive struggles that characterised the late 1960s and early 70s. There must, says the BRS – again correctly – be a "struggle to end capitalism"; "capitalism's crisis cannot be solved within the limits of capitalism." It states that "only socialism can overcome the basic contradiction of capitalist society" and for that what is needed is "socialist revolution" (p15). But does the BRS mean it?

Not at all. As we have seen, the BRS is full of opportunist escape clauses. Deviously, after outlining the advantages of socialism, it again claims that the so-called "decisive change in the balance of world forces" makes it possible to have a "revolution" without world war, military intervention, civil war or, for that matter, social collapse (p16).

But why does the BRS link world war and military intervention with civil war and violent revolution? Simple. By putting them into a single category which is not necessary for socialism, those who advocate a genuinely revolutionary strategy – which would include violent revolution, which itself is a form of civil war – can be dismissed as madmen, advocates of world war. Of course, this is only done by implication. Nonetheless it is a transparent ruse to break the struggle for socialism in Britain from developments in the world as a whole and lay the basis for dishonestly calling the BRS's programme of reforms a "strategy for socialism".

Jack Conrad